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ForteanTimes

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CHARLES MANSON, THE
OCCULT EXPLOSION AND
THE END OF THE SIXTIES

DOING THE DEVIL'S WORK

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE
TEMPLE OF SATAN

WACKY WAGERS

THE MAN BEHIND THE
WORLD'S WEIRDEST BETS



**"ONE OF THE KEY WRITERS WHO HAVE MADE
MODERN HORROR EXCITING AGAIN."**

Adam Nevill, author of *The Ritual*

"A HEAD FULL OF GHOSTS SCARED
THE LIVING HELL OUT OF ME, AND
I'M PRETTY HARD TO SCARE."




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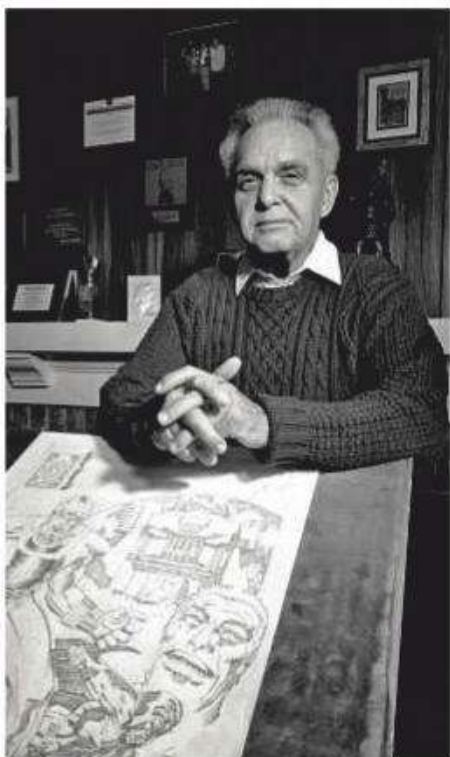
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FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

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© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
31-32 ALFRED PLACE, LONDON, WC1E 7DP

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PRINTED BY WILLIAM GIBBONS & SONS LTD

DISTRIBUTION

Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide

by Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk

Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 788 1272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

12 issues: UK £48; Europe £58; Rest of world £68
US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

Fortean Times, ISSN 0308-5899, is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica, NY 114314, USA.

US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, UK.
Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
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Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
ABC 14,816 (Jan-Dec 2018)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: AUGUST 2019

EDITORIAL



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

SATANIC RITES AND WRONGS

THE DEVIL'S BUSINESS

Two years ago in these pages (FT356:40-47) Gary Lachman marked the 50th anniversary of the 'Summer of Love', tracing the downward trajectory of the hippie dream of personal, sexual and psychedelic liberation as it played out on the streets of San Francisco's Haight Ashbury during 1967. If the hoped-for revolution in consciousness faltered and died in the Haight, there was far worse to come. In this issue we look back at what for many – along with Altamont a few months later – came to mark the nadir of the Sixties: the horrific murders masterminded by Charles Manson and carried out by his cult-like 'Family' 50 years ago. James Riley (p34) examines the various occult currents washing around the late Sixties counterculture, creating a web of 'Satanic' connections linking characters as varied as Anton LaVey, Kenneth Anger, Roman Polanski and one-time Haight hippie Manson himself.

Modern-day Satanists (or are they SJW pranksters or alt-right apologists in Devilish disguise?) The Temple of Satan continue to make headlines, helped by Penny Lane's new film about them, *Hail Satan?* The Temple's leader, co-founder and spokesperson Lucien Greaves, agreed to talk to FT about the film, the group and its aims, and the importance of establishing the legitimacy of non-theistic religions in the United States today. Who better to talk to His Satanic Majesty than our resident vicar, Rev Peter Laws? You can see how the two got along on p42. Just don't mention the Church of Satan!

HOUSES OF THE UNHOLY

Meanwhile, two stories landed on our desk as we were going to press. The house at 10050 Cielo Drive where Sharon Tate and her companions were murdered by Charles Manson's followers must be one of the most notorious addresses in modern murder lore; it was demolished in 1994, when a new home was built on the site and assigned a new address. Perhaps surprisingly, the house where Manson Family members killed Leno and Rosemary LaBianca the

following night still stands and is currently up for sale. Enter US TV ghost hunter Zak Bagans, last seen in these pages buying and then demolishing the Gary, Indiana, 'Demon House' (FT313:476-53, 340:23, 372:58-59) Now Bagans has his eye on 3311 Waverly Drive, noting that there "was a very, very strong energy in the house... I love to investigate spirits and places. This

is a beautiful place with a very dark history".

We'll have to wait and see whether he thinks that "dark history" is worth the \$1.98 million asking price. Next, news reached us that Aleister Crowley's one-time home Boleskine House, on the shores of Loch Ness, had been damaged in a blaze on the night of 30 August. The Georgian house – famously snapped up and subsequently sold by rock star and latter-day Thelemite Jimmy Page

– was already in a ruined state following a fire in 2015, and was sold earlier this year; Scottish Police believe this latest fire was started deliberately. (*Observer*, 27 July; *BBC News*, 31 July 2019).

GOODBYE TO OUR MAN IN NORWAY

We were very sad to learn of the death from cancer of "our man in Norway", Nils Grande, on 27 June. Fifty of his letters have appeared in our pages since FT287 (May 2012). Nils was born on 9 June 1954 in Trondheim, and grew up in Lom, in the mountains of Norway. He showed an early aptitude for language, could read by the age of three, and taught himself English by age 12. Two years later he was composing and scoring his own music. He pursued his interest in music at Oslo University, and eventually switched to a career in software design. His was a life of curiosity and continuous learning, surrounded by books. We shall miss his informative and witty contributions. Many thanks to his sister for providing us with further information and sending the photograph of Nils shown above.



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A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

STRANGE DAYS

GLOBAL SWARMING

A plague of grasshoppers in Las Vegas, clouds of flying ants in Britain, locusts on the menu in Yemen

● A wet spring in Las Vegas, Nevada, has spawned hordes of grasshoppers so large they're showing up on the weather radar. It looked as if there were two storms – one north of Las Vegas (that was actual rain) and another right over the city; but the second one wasn't moving as rain normally would, and was actually massive swarms of grasshoppers. In late July they covered the city, often concentrated around the Vegas lights and green spaces. Practically the whole city is covered in ultraviolet lights, the most iconic being the Sky Beam shooting up from the pyramid-shaped Luxor. Many videos on social media show grasshoppers swarming around the Sky Beam.

The pallid-winged grasshoppers are from the *Acrididae* family and range from Argentina to British Columbia, but are concentrated in North America, particularly in desert ecosystems. Between 1952 and 1980 there were six grasshopper outbreaks in Arizona, one of which lasted two years. Outbreaks are recorded in Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and California. In this instance, the invasion was associated with unusually high rainfall around Vegas and to the south. The city averages 5in (13cm) of rain per year. From January to June the same amount of rain fell, equalling the annual total in the first half of the year. There's not much residents can do about the grasshoppers, which are harmless. Officials discourage the use of pesticides, as those insects killed will simply be replaced within 24 hours. [CNN] 28 July; forbes.com, 29 July 2019.



ABOVE: Grasshoppers swarm around a light a few blocks off the Strip in Las Vegas, on 26 July. The hopping hordes are the result of a unusually wet spring in the area.

● Around the same time, a swarm of flying ants invaded Britain. What looked like ordinary rain clouds were in fact alive. The ants were so dense weather satellites picked them up as raindrops. This insect invasion is an annual swarming event, commonly known as 'Flying Ant Day', although it's more like a season, occurring at any time between June and the start of September, with a peak that lasts several days. After a period of hot and humid weather, the black garden ants (*Lasius niger*) take to the skies in droves, cluttering the horizon, flying into homes and mouths, and distracting tennis players at Wimbledon. While "Flying Ant Season" is usually considered a nuisance, it is also hugely beneficial to the ecosystem. The ants are a vital source of food for birds and the way that they tunnel and dig their nests has

profound implications for soil quality. sciencealert.com, 28 July 2019.

● Meanwhile in Yemen, desert locusts inundated rebel-held Sana'a and surrounding regions, devastating farms but also providing a bumper crop of this Yemeni delicacy. Crowds chased the swarms of locusts using special nets. Men stood on rooftops with large nets, scooping the insects out of the air. Some people catch locusts at night when they're not flying, by throwing scarves or other large pieces of cloth to trap them and then sweeping them into bags using shovels or their hands. This was the second major swarm to hit the Yemeni capital in recent weeks, with another passing through in June. Locals and traders said that locusts were a good remedy for numerous health problems, as well as

being a good source of protein. "We know from our fathers and grandfathers that locusts are used to treat various conditions such as diabetes," said a man in Sana'a central market. "Its taste is delicious. If you eat one locust, you will end up wanting to eat five," said Sana'a resident Wadai al-Nawdah. "I walk every day after breakfast to find locusts for dinner. I have become addicted."

Farmers, however, are less enthusiastic. The famed Yemeni grape farmers in the area who cultivate the country's best vines said they had been particularly affected. An adult locust can eat its body weight in fresh vegetation every day and even a small swarm can consume enough food for 35,000 people in 24 hours. Once they swarm, they become highly mobile and are able to fly 150km (90 miles) in a day. With a female locust able to lay 300 eggs in her short life, a swarm can quickly grow to hundreds of millions of insects and measure miles across.

This year has seen several major swarms across the region after two cyclones in May and October last year brought heavy rains to a large area of Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter, one of the main locust breeding grounds. Three generations were born in a short time before they were detected by ground monitoring teams. Swarms have hit Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan and Egypt and have even crossed to Sardinia. Locusts breed and gather anywhere across millions of hectares of desert from Morocco to Pakistan. *Jerusalem Post*, 3 June; *thenational.ae* (UAE), 29 July 2019.



VERY SENIOR CITIZENS

A round-up of the world's oldest people

PAGE 10



LOOKING DAGGERS

Belief in the evil eye on a Greek island

PAGE 16



TRIPPING ACROSS TIME

The man who got dosed by a vintage synth

PAGE 28

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

This month brings a return, a resurrection, an exhumation, and a reprise. **NOEL ROONEY** reports on two-way traffic at the rabbit hole...

Q BACK

After a month's absence from the ether, Q is back and Q is busy. Recent posts consist of the usual smorgasbord of quasi-constitutional posturing, numerological riffs (on B2 bombers, for instance: the Anon seemed to take particular pleasure in that one), pro-life propaganda, cryptic allusions to various public figures, and calls to arms for the followers. The new accusations against shamed tycoon Jeffrey Epstein figure prominently; it's a nice opportunity for alt-righters to drag out pictures of all the famous people who ever flew on a plane (not a B2) with him, and for Q to egg them on with a few well-chosen crumbs.

One news item that Q signally has not commented on is the story – which featured in quite a number of broadsheets, as well as *Rolling Stone* magazine – that QAnon folks believed JFK Jr was about to stage a remarkable comeback, on 4 July. Could this silence on Q's part be down to the fact that the story is really a puff piece, elevated to news by a media machine that was actually rather missing Q and wanted to keep the flames fanned until the elusive posts came back on stream? Last year a QAnon adherent asked Q about precisely this old chestnut and was told, fairly categorically, that JFK Jr was, in fact, dead, therefore not lurking in some kind of Arthurian cold storage waiting for a significant date on which to jump up and leer through a split panel door, bellowing "Here's Johnny!" or whatever the patrician Bostonian equivalent may be. But, truth be damned, you can't keep a good story down.

The Kennedy puffery wasn't the only ghost of times past to make a media reprise. News reports claimed that a number of graves in the Vatican's Teutonic Cemetery were to be opened in another attempt to solve the mystery around the disappearance of Emanuela Orlandi, in 1983. Orlandi, and another girl named Mirella Gregori, both 15 at the time, disappeared within a few

months of each other and have never been found. It's in the capricious nature of the media hive mind that only Orlandi's story has remained in public view, periodically resurfacing with new rumours and theories.

The Conspirasphere's archives contain a trove of theories on the subject: was Orlandi done in by a rogue Swiss Guard after a spat with the family? Was she killed to cover up the sexual misconduct of a high-ranking Vatican cleric? Did the Mafia kidnap her in an attempt to pressure the Italian authorities? Is she still alive and living as a Cosa Nostra concubine somewhere in Sicily? And of course, there is the (in)famous Mehmet Ali Agca, the deeply eccentric Turkish assassin who tried to off Pope John-Paul II, who claimed she had been taken by the Grey Wolves (a deep state paramilitary group, or a bunch of deluded Turkish nationalists, depending on your point of view) as a bargaining chip in negotiations for his release; although he later claimed that Our Lady of Fatima was his actual liberator, after JP II had the bullets that struck him built into her crown. When the tombs were opened it turned out they contain no human remains – not even those of the German princesses meant to be buried there; a further mystery?

The 50th anniversary of the first Moon landing has generated a huge amount of laudatory and nostalgic press activity. It is also curiously noteworthy, for those of us who track the trajectory of the Conspirasphere, that a large proportion of the articles give space (ouch), and often a good deal of it, to the theory – by now something of an industry, and rite of passage for entry into the rabbit hole – that the landings were faked. Further proof, if any were needed, that conspiracy theory is firmly embedded in contemporary mainstream thought, almost to the point where "fair and balanced reporting" requires trotting out a conspiracy angle before a story is considered complete.

EXTRA! EXTRA!



FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

ELVIS PRESLEY DENIES THREATENING MAN WITH KNIFE AT LAUNDRETTE

Independent, 15 Mar 2019.

'Dinosaur disco' discovered in Scotland

Toronto Star, 5 Dec 2015.

UNICORN TO BLAME AS BURGLAR ALARM ANNOYS RESIDENTS

Scotsman, 6 May 2016.

Sex-crazed peacocks terrorise village in Durham

Yahoo News, via Irish Independent, 7 May 2016.

DEAF JUROR GETS A HEARING

(Brisbane) Courier Mail, 26 July 2015.

Hobbit spotted in country park

Nottingham Post, 9 Nov 2016.

VACUUM CLEANER TO HEAL CHRONIC WOUNDS

D.Mail, 22 Nov 2016.

DEAD AROUND THE WORLD

Heartily sick of selfies colonising social media, Stephanie Leigh Rose decided that she would rather die than take a selfie, and she's putting her camera where her mouth is. She has created a website and Instagram account called "Stefdies". Her pictures, usually taken in front of beautiful backdrops, don't showcase the perfect angle and smile, but instead her "lifeless" body lying flat on the ground. She explains that the photo series is intended to provoke discussion on "mortality, the function of photography, and stirs the imagination." *matador.com*, 1 May 2019. PHOTOS: www.stefdies.com; www.facebook.com/stefdiesofficial/; www.instagram.com/stefdies/







SIDELINES...

FALSE ALARM

A Dutch UFO website was flooded with reports after a “train of stars” was spotted crossing the sky, sparking fears of an alien invasion. It turned out to be 60 satellites launched by Elon Musk’s SpaceX as part of its “starlink” plan to provide Internet services from space. (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, 1 June 2019.

MASSIVE POWER CUT

A power cut left an estimated 48 million people in South America without electricity on 16 June. All of Argentina and Uruguay and parts of Brazil, Chile and Paraguay were affected. A transmission system at Yacyretá Dam on the Paraná River, near Ayolas in Paraguay, had failed “without human intervention”. In some places, power was not restored until the next day. *D.Telegraph*, 17 June 2019.

SPHERICAL IRONY

On 23 May, the University of Sussex Flat Earth Society held its first social event at The Globe pub in Middle Street, Brighton. On Facebook, 296 people said they were going. *D.Star*, 24 May; *theargus.co.uk*, 25 May 2019.

SIMIAN SYMPATHY

A monkey apparently comforting a grieving widow at a funeral, in Nargund, India, became a social media sensation. Footage shows the monkey putting an arm around the crying woman and patting her on the head. Witnesses said the monkey had been spotted at other funerals. *Times*, 22 April 2019.

ANIMAL ODDITIES | Unusual sports of nature, tangled tails, and thieving rodents



NORTHERN TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

ABOVE: Monty Python, the three-eyed baby carpet python found on a road near the northern Australian town of Humpty Doo. Sadly, Monty’s mutation meant that he struggled to eat and he died just weeks later.

THREE-EYED SNAKE

This three-eyed snake was found on Arnhem Highway near the town of Humpty Doo just outside of Darwin in northern Australia last March. Nicknamed Monty Python, the 15in (40cm) long baby carpet python died just weeks later. It had been struggling to eat due to its deformity. In a Facebook posting, the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service said: “The snake is peculiar as an X-ray revealed it was not two separate heads forged together, rather it appeared to be one skull with an additional eye socket and three functioning eyes. It was generally agreed that the eye likely developed very early during the embryonic stage of development. It is extremely unlikely that this is from environmental factors and is almost certainly a natural occurrence as malformed reptiles are relatively common.”

Snake expert Professor Bryan Fry from the University of Queensland commented: “I haven’t seen a three-eyed snake before, but we have a two-headed carpet python in our lab – it’s just a different kind of

mutation like what we see with Siamese twins.” He suggested that the snake’s third eye could have been “the last little bit of a twin that’s been absorbed”. *mirror.co.uk*, *BBC News*, 2 May 2019.

‘UNICORN’ SHEEP

When stock agent Michael Foster from South Australia laid eyes on Joey the “unicorn” sheep he knew he couldn’t let such a rare animal end up on a barbecue, so he ‘bought’ it



ABOVE: Joey the “unicorn” sheep – bought for two cases of beer.



MARTIN ROSS



RSPCA

ABOVE: The “squirrel king” found in woods near Stockton-on-Tees. The babies were rescued by the RSPCA and untangled by a local vet. **BELOW:** A dead rat discovered among the shredded remains of banknotes in an ATM in Assam, northeastern India.

for two cases of beer. Joey’s mythical appearance comes from one of his horns not fully developing, making one a lot more prominent than the other. He now lives as a beloved pet on Mr Foster’s property in Burra. “We’ll break him in, take him to shows and pageants, and who knows where we can go, maybe Hollywood,” he said. *news.com.au*, 15 April 2019.

ALL TIED UP

This May, four baby squirrels, tied together by their tails, were found in woodland near Stockton-on-Tees by a member of the public, who called the RSPCA. An officer took them to a local vet who managed to untangle their tails, which were effectively plaited together. RSPCA inspector Clare Wilson said: “I think they must have become entangled in the nest and, maybe in their haste to get free, jumped over each other effectively plaiting the tails so they were completely stuck.” Such a cluster of rats is traditionally known as a rat king, hence the term “squirrel king”.

In May last year, six young squirrels whose tails were stuck

together were rescued from a pine tree in Omaha. Their sap-covered tails had become knotted as the youngsters, aged about eight weeks, wrestled in their nest. Nebraska Wildlife Rehab executive director Laura Stastny gave them a mild painkiller before removing the sticky fur and untangling them [FT373:9]. *BBC News*, 10 May 2018. For earlier squirrel kings, see FT45:36, 46, 63:13, 104:11, 300:14, 355:25.

- On 16 January 2005, farmer Rein Kiiv discovered a 16-strong rat king under the floor of his shed in the Estonian village of Saru. He put the rats on a pile of planks for visitors to see. Two months later, zoologists got to hear of it. The rat king of Saru has been preserved in alcohol and is on display at the Natural History Museum at the University of Tartu. For another rat king, see FT237:22. *D.Mail*, 13 April 2018.

DIRTY RATS

In other rat news, Dheeraj Kumar suspected a staff member after discovering that a pair of diamond earrings was missing from his shop in Patna, Bihar.

However, CCTV footage showed a rat entering through the ceiling and making off with the studs from a display cabinet. They had not been recovered. *Irish Times*, 9 Mar 2019.

- Police in India said that rats had nibbled their way through more than a million rupees worth of banknotes when they got into a cash machine. After reports of an ATM in Tinsukia, in India’s northeastern Assam state, failing to dispense cash, investigation revealed shredded notes, in 2000 and 500 rupee denominations, and the body of a dead rat. *Hindustan Times*, 20 June 2018.



SIDELINES...

SEA MONSTER

An anonymous buyer paid £4,600 for an antique 5ft 5in (165cm) stuffed whale penis at an auction in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex. *Sunday People*, 24 Feb 2019.

TOO MUCH INFORMATION

A teacher has been suspended for making pupils cry by telling them he was Jesus and that he knew when the world would end. The comments were made at a primary school in Turkey’s Antalya province. *Metro*, 24 April 2019.

DRINK DRIVERS

On 28 February a driver was pulled over in Exeter and a breath test found he had consumed twice the legal alcohol limit. He was Harry Booz, 31. Then on 9 March a 44-year-old driver was pulled over in Butler County, Pennsylvania, for driving erratically. He had downed more than twice the legal booze limit, despite his name – Daniel Sober. *D.Mirror*, 1 Mar; *huffpost.com*, 20 Mar 2019.

HOT MONKEYS

In June scorching temperatures in India lasted for more than a week. A troop of monkeys died from suspected heatstroke in Joshi Baba forest range in Madhya Pradesh, where the temperature reached 114°F (46°C). They were believed to have fought a rival troop over access to a water source. *Sunday Telegraph*, 9 June 2019.

RELIC THEFT

Clothing belonging to two child saints has been stolen from a church in Verona, Italy. Francisco and Jacinta Marto, from Fátima in Portugal, reported seeing the Virgin Mary in 1917. *Metro*, 30 May 2019.

MYSTERY COLLISION

Almost 90 people were injured on 9 March when a ferry travelling near Sado Island in the Sea of Japan collided with a “massive marine creature”. No trace of it was found, but there was a 6in (15cm) wide crack in the hull. The fact that no remains or other traces of any whales were found suggested the possibility that the boat collided with something more unusual. In 2015, a 12ft (3.7m) giant squid was filmed just south of Nigata where the ferry collision took place. *mysteriousuniverse.org*, 12 Mar 2019.



SIDELINES...

HELLUVA NAME

Unusual names chosen by new parents in 2018 included Lucifer, Messiah, Awesome, Nun, Royalty and Corbyn-Bleu (yes, really). Olivia was the most popular name for girls in Scotland, but Luna-Marvel-la, Favour, Pepper and Alba-Crystal were also picked. Jack topped boys' names, but Harlem-Ace, Echo, Winter and Merlin were other new arrivals. *Sun*, 20 Mar 2019.

LOURDES HAVE MERCY

Many families in the Catholic pilgrimage town of Lourdes hold stakes in the 66 shops and stalls selling holy water and religious statues and trinkets; but their livelihoods are threatened by the local council's plan to sell off the shops to private owners in order to cancel municipal debt. The town, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, attracts more than six million visitors a year. *D.Telegraph*, 25 Mar 2019.

LAST ORDERS, PLEASE

The French doctrine of imminent apocalypse goes under the unlikely *franglais* name *la collapsologie*, coined by agronomist Pablo Servigne in his 2015 bestseller, *Comment tout peut s'effondrer*. It's based on the assumption that climate change, declining resources, species extinction and rubbish mountains are driving humanity to the brink by as early as 2030. *Times*, 14 Feb 2019.

FRUIT BAT

An unnamed man had already eaten two mouthfuls from a plastic jar of Goulburn Valley peaches before finding a dead micro-bat about the size of a tablespoon. His wife said he put the pickled bat into his mouth before realising he was eating a mammal instead of a fruit. *dailymail.co.uk*, 1 Mar 2019.



MARTIN ROSS

MORE LATE DEPARTURES | Super-centenarians in the world's news



STR / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Julia Flores Colque, rocking on as she nears the age of 119. **FACING PAGE:** Richard Overton made it to 112, cigars and all.

- Julia Flores Colque is said to be the world's oldest person, approaching the age of 119. Her ID card, certified by the Bolivian government, claims she was born in a Bolivian mining camp on 26 October 1900, though Guinness World Records have not been approached for confirmation of this. Birth certificates were introduced in Bolivia in 1940; before that, births were registered by baptism certificates issued by the Catholic Church. As a child, Ms Colque herded sheep and llamas in the Bolivian highlands until she moved in her teenage years to a valley, where she sold fruit and vegetables. She never married, still sings in her indigenous Quechua tongue and strums a *charango* (tiny Andean guitar) at her home in Sacaba, where she lives with her grand niece. Researchers in Denmark have found a way to determine age by radiocarbon dating the lens of the eye, but normally this can only be done post mortem. Despite Russian disinformation [FT376:15], the all-time official longevity record holder is still the Frenchwoman Jeanne Calment (122 years and 164 days). *Metro*, 29 Aug 2018.

- Olive Evelyn Boar, née Macro, became Britain's oldest person on 11 May 2018, when the Yorkshire woman Bessie Camm died at the age of 113 years and 325 days. Mrs Boar, a former seamstress and grandmother of five, was born in Ipswich, Suffolk, on 29 September 1904, the fourth of eight children, and married Claude Boar in 1932. In 1935 they bought a house in Ipswich for £300. Claude died in 1979 and his widow stayed on in the house until moving to a care home in Felixstowe in 2013. She died on 28 August 2018, aged 113 years and 333 days. She didn't own a passport and had never been abroad. Her son Robin Boar, 73, recalled how she did everything by hand, despite the effects of ageing, refusing to use an automatic washing machine. "Her roast dinners were fairly renowned," he said. "She would make five times as much as you could possibly eat." *East Anglian Daily Times*, 2 Sept; *BBC News*, *independent.co.uk*, 3 Sept 2018.

- Richard Overton, possibly the oldest man in the US, died on 27 December, aged 112. He served in the all-black 1887th

Engineer Aviation Battalion for three years and was involved in combat operations and beach landings in the Pacific during WWII. He credited his longevity to cigars and whisky. "I been smoking cigars from when I was 18 years old, I'm still a smoking 'em. Twelve a day," he said. On Veterans' Day in 2013, Barack Obama said: "[Overton] was there at Pearl Harbor, when the battleships were still smouldering. He was there at Okinawa. He was there at Iwo Jima, where he said, 'I only got out of there by the grace of God.'" Born in 1906, he spent most of his life in Austin, Texas, and for his 111th birthday Austin City Council renamed the street he had lived on for more than 70 years Richard Overton Avenue. Well into his 100s, he would drive widows to church. *BBC News*, 28 Dec; *Guardian*, 29 Dec 2018.

- Masazo Nonaka, a former innkeeper in Japan, became 'officially' the oldest man in the world in April 2018 [FT371:7]. He was born on 25 July 1905 and died on 20 January 2019, aged 113 years and 177 days. He had outlived seven siblings, his wife,



and three of their five children. His family had run a hot springs inn in Ashoro, Hokkaido, for four generations. It is now run by his granddaughter, Yuko. The fastest-aging country in the world, Japan as of September 2018 had a centenarian population of 69,785, nearly 90 per cent of them women. [AP, PA] 20 Jan; D.Mirror, irishexaminer.com, 21 Jan 2019.

- A day after Nonaka's death, a woman called Nanu Shaova died in the Caucasus region – in the Russian republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. Her passport gave her age as 127, and in 2017 the Russia Book of Records register her as the country's oldest person. She claimed to remember the month of her birth as May 1900, but not the exact date. *Eve. Standard*, 22 Jan 2019.

- Koku Istambulova, a Chechen Muslim woman who never went to school and claimed never to have had a happy day in her life, died on 27 January at the supposed age of 129 years and six months. State pension records gave her date of birth as June 1889, without a specific date. *D.Express*, 7 Feb 2019.

- On 9 March, Kane Tanaka, 116, was recognised by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest living person. She was born on 2 January 1903, the seventh of eight children. She married Hideo Tanaka in 1922,

had four children and adopted another. She lives in a rest home in Fukuoka, Japan. She is usually up by 6am and enjoys calligraphy, calculations and the board game Othello. *Sunday Express*, 10 Mar 2019.

- Britain's oldest men – Robert Weighton from Alton, Hampshire, and Alfred Smith from St Madoes, Perthshire – both born on 29 March 1908, turned 111 this year [FT371:7]. They have never met but have exchanged birthday cards in recent years. *BBC News*, 29 Mar; *Dundee Courier & Advertiser*, 30 Mar; *D.Telegraph*, 10 June 2019.

- Following Olive Boar's death last August, Grace Jones became Britain's oldest person. Coincidentally, there was another Grace Jones supercentenarian, a south Londoner born in 1899, who died aged 113 years and 342 days in 2013 [FT330:15]. Grace Jones Junior, known to her family as 'Amazing Grace', was born in Liverpool on 16 September 1906 and died at her home in Broadway, Worcestershire, on 7 June 2019, aged 112 years and 264 days. The former millinery factory owner (whose maiden name is not given in any press reports) married chief engineer Leonard Roderick Jones in 1933 in Liverpool. Both were children of vicars. He died in 1986, aged 79.

The restless couple lived in 28 homes in Liverpool,

Devon, Cheshire, North Wales and Worcestershire. She finally moved to Mickleton, Worcestershire, in 2005 to be near her daughter, Deirdre McCarthy. Amazing Grace said the secret to her long life was a nightcap of Famous Grouse single malt whisky every evening for the last 62 years. Deirdre, 80, said of her mother: "She did everything with style, never grumbled and was always active... She doesn't worry. She's always said, 'Worry doesn't do you any good at all'." The oldest person in Britain is now thought to be Dorothy Payne, 111, of Sevenoaks, Kent, born on 5 August 1907.

Moderate whisky consumption has been linked with a variety of health benefits including weight loss, lower risk of dementia and reduced risk of stroke. A study from the *Rowett Research Institute* in Aberdeen found whisky also helped protect against coronary heart disease by raising antioxidant levels in the body. These antioxidants originate from the oak barrels used to store whisky during maturation. They help to counteract destructive chemicals in the blood that hasten the ageing process. *dailymail.co.uk*, 16 Sept; *irishpost.com*, 21 Sept 2018; *BBC News*, 13 June; *Metro*, *D.Mirror*, *D.Mail*, 14 June 2019.

- Giuseppina Robucci was said to be Europe's oldest person. She was born on 20 March 1903 in the southern Italian town of Poggio Imperiale, and died in the same town on 18 June, aged 116 years and 90 days. She was born 77 days after Kane Tanaka, the current longevity world record holder (see above). Known locally as Nonna Peppa, Robucci had five children, nine grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. She ran a coffee bar with her husband for years, and had been named "honorary mayor" in 2012. Italy previously claimed the world's oldest woman. Emma Morano, the last living person verified to have been born in the 19th century, died on 15 April 2017, aged 117 years and 137 days [FT354:22, 365:22]. [AP] 19 June 2019.

For our last round-up of supercentenarians, see FT371:6-7.

SIDELINES...

OTHERWORDLY

Last April, theatre company Puppeteers for Fears revived their 2016 blockbuster *Cattle Mutilation: The Musical!* at the Oregon Fringe Festival in Ashland, Oregon, before touring the West Coast until August. It tells the story of two duelling parent-child relationships, one from Earth and another from the Crab Nebula, and what happens when they all get mixed up on a late-night search for Bigfoot. *nightmarishconjurings.com*, 20 Mar 2019.

MUCH TOO FRIENDLY

When a 67-year-old Chinese man surnamed Liu returned to his house in Yongzhou City, Hunan province, on 11 February, he was knocked out by something falling from the sky. His 60lb (27kg) husky, excited to see him, had jumped 23ft (7m) from the second floor of his house, landing on top of him and breaking his neck, requiring corrective surgery. The dog was uninjured. *thaivisa.com*, 14 Feb 2019.

SHEEPISH SUCCESSION

The new mayor of Lewes in East Sussex is Councillor John Lamb. He succeeds Councillor Janet Baah. (Stop tittering at the back of the council chamber.) *Sussex Express*, 24 May 2019.

WHEEL PASSION

A woman won an insurance payout after a frisky horse tried to have sex with her car. Aviva agreed to compensate her for repairs to crumpled metal and scratched paint where the stallion had scrambled to get a foothold. *Sun*, 11 April 2019.



MARTIN ROSS



OLIVIER DOULIERY-POOL / GETTY IMAGES

SIDELINES...

GOLFING HEART

Mike Hanlon, 57, scored a hole-in-one on 8 July 2018 after receiving a transplanted heart from another keen golfer, Ben Pedley from Reading, who had died after crashing into a pedestrian while cycling. Five days earlier, Mr Hanlon's son Michael, 20, had hit an ace at the same hole at Clober golf club in Milngavie, Glasgow. *D.Express*, 10 July 2019.

DO THE MASHED POTATO

On 9 April, residents of the Belhaven neighbourhood in Jackson, Mississippi, were puzzled to find bowls of mashed potatoes on their cars, porches and mailboxes. "We don't know if someone is just playing a prank or if someone just had a lot of leftovers," said resident Jordan Lewis. Some people feared the mashed potatoes were poisoned to kill animals, but this was unconfirmed. *[AP] Washington Post*, 12 April 2019.

PREGNANT PYTHON

A python 17ft (5.2m) long, weighing 140lb (63.5kg) and carrying 73 developing eggs, was caught in Big Cypress National Preserve, Florida, the largest ever found there. Researchers in the park track down breeding females by fitting male pythons with radio transmitters and following them. Burmese pythons were first spotted in Florida's Everglades in the 1980s and now number in the thousands, posing a major threat to native wildlife. *BBC News*, 8 April; *NY Times*, 10 April 2019.

SHELL SHOCK

The rear tyre on a truck hit a turtle on US Highway 501 near Conway, South Carolina, on 30 April. The turtle hurtled through the air and shattered a car's windshield. Driver John Gardner said he had no time to react to what was just a "big black dot coming at me". He was covered in glass shards but not hurt. The turtle was killed. *[AP]* 3 May 2019.

COSMIC INFLATION

New measurements confirm that the Universe is expanding about nine per cent faster than expected, based on its trajectory seen shortly after the Big Bang. The chance this is a mistake is one in 100,000. New theories of physics will be required to explain the findings. *<i>26 April 2019.*

IT'S A MIRACLE!



ABOVE: This white dove's intercession saved a speeding driver from a fine. ABOVE: Jesus weeps tears of blood in Kilómetro 42.

'HOLY SPIRIT' SAVES DRIVER

A speeding driver in Viersen, Germany, was saved from a €105 (£93) fine when a white dove interceded on his behalf. The driver was caught on speed cameras, but his identity was hidden by the bird's wings spread in flight. He was travelling at 54km/h (34mph) on a stretch of road with a 30km/h speed limit. A police statement suggested that perhaps "it was no coincidence the Holy Spirit" intervened. "We have understood the sign and leave the speeder in peace this time." Since only the car, and not the driver, could be identified, he was probably spared the fine "thanks to the feathered guardian angel with seemingly carefully spread wings". *BBC News*, 28 May; *D.Telegraph*, 29 May 2019.

JESUS WEPT

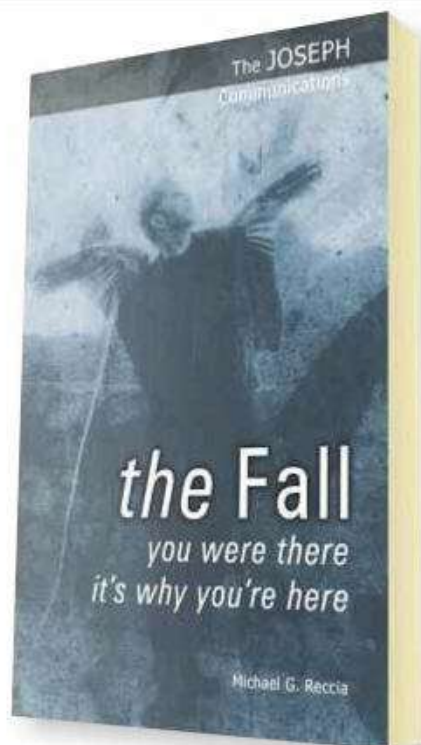
A statue of the baby Jesus in Kilómetro 42, a rural area near Acapulco in Mexico, has appeared to cry blood for the fourth time this year. According to local media, the first time the ceramic statue cried blood was on New Year's Day, while the most recent occurrence was on 4 March, two days

before Ash Wednesday. Residents believe that the statue, which is kept in a private residence, is weeping because of the soaring crime levels in the locality, which has an average of 111 murders for every 100,000 inhabitants.

Local resident Soledad Natividad Flores said: "A lot of people have said that this is being done by the Devil while others believe that it is a message from God. The truth is, we are convinced that it cried, even when people were holding it." Residents claimed that they did not want to carry the statue to a church for verification because they were scared of removing it. Church authorities were investigating the claims to make sure that no one was taking advantage of devotees.

There have been at least 15 known cases of weeping statues worldwide since 1949. Only one – in Akita, Japan – has been recognised by the Vatican as a genuine miracle. *Sun*, 18 Mar; *mysteriousuniverse.org* 20 Mar 2019.

For a painting in India of Jesus that wept bloody tears, see **FT172:12**. For a BVM statue weeping tears of blood in Sacramento, California, see **FT208:8**. For other weeping statues, see **FT350:8, 369:22, 370:4**.



Mankind's first giant leap wasn't exactly a resounding success.

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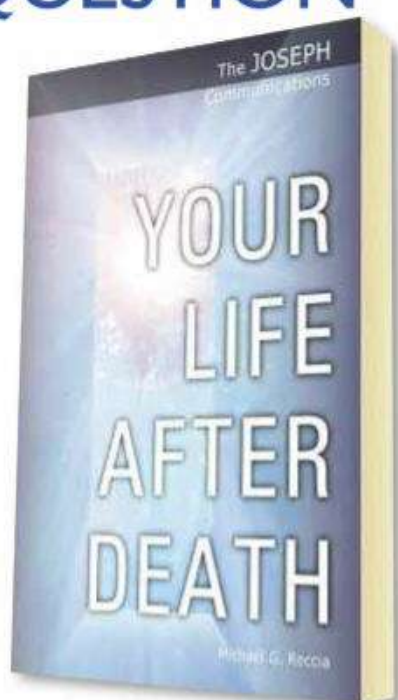
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PAUL DEVEREUX, Managing Editor of *Time & Mind*, digs up the latest archaeological discoveries

STUCK...

Residues of adhesives have been detected on a small number of 1,000 stone tools recovered from two caves on the western coast of southern Italy – Grotta del Fossellone and Grotta di Sant’Agostino. The tools were dated to between 40,000 and 55,000 years old, and so had been worked by Neanderthals long before modern humans entered Europe. Small rocks had been chipped and pummelled into sharp-edged hand-held tools for millions of years, but attaching them to wooden or bone handles marked a major advance. The tools would be slotted onto the handles and bound with sinews or plant fibres, but these objects found in the Italian caves indicate a further advance by the much-maligned Neanderthals in adding a wonder substance, glue, to fix the tools to their handles even more securely. *Archaeology; arstechnica, 2 July 2019.*

...AND UNSTUCK

A team of 400 volunteers have unearthed some interesting 1,800-year-old objects at the Roman fort of Vindolanda in Hexham, near Hadrian’s Wall. One was the sole of a soldier’s shoe (size 11), and another the remnants of a playing board for a game called *Ludus latrunculorum*. But the star finds were two gemstones, carnelian and red jasper, carved with figures thought to represent the gods Minerva and Apollo. They had become unstuck from rings because the glue fixing them was not strong enough. (Perhaps the Romans could have taken a tip from our Neanderthal forerunners.)

“These stones were recovered from the Third Century bath house toilet drain – their owners either did not initially notice that their gemstones had fallen out of the rings and into the loo or they could not face climbing down into the toilet to try to recover them,” opined Dr Andrew Birley, chief executive officer at the Vindolanda Trust. *BBC News, 29 June 2019.*

YET ANOTHER ONE

Evidence of yet another previously unknown species of hominin (early example of the human genus) has been found. This newly discovered human forerunner has been dubbed *Homo luzonensis*: the 50,000-year-old fossil remains of at least two adults and one youngster have been uncovered in the Callao Cave on Luzon Island, Philippines.



ABOVE: Associate Professor Armand Salvador Mijares of the University of the Philippines holds up a bone of the newly discovered human forerunner, *Homo luzonensis*. **BELOW:** The carved gemstones unearthed in Hexham.



“The fossil remains included adult finger and toe bones, as well as teeth,” informs Professor Philip Piper of Australian National University. “The teeth are really very small...The size of the teeth generally, though not always, reflect the overall body-size of a mammal, so we think *Homo luzonensis* was probably relatively small. Exactly how small we don’t know yet.” In fact, it seems that *Homo luzonensis* shares some unique skeletal features with tiny *Homo floresiensis*, aka ‘the hobbit’, discovered on the island of Flores near the Philippine archipelago, about which FT has reported since 2004 [**FT191:4-5, 355:16**, etc]. (Species that develop in island isolation tend to be subject to ‘island dwarfism’ – perhaps due to a need to exist on limited resources.)

“The Philippines is made up of a group of large islands that have been separated long enough to have potentially facilitated archipelago speciation,” Piper points out. “There is no reason why archaeological research in the Philippines couldn’t discover several species of hominin. It’s probably just a matter of time.”

EurekAlert, 10 April 2019. (Full account in the journal, Nature, 10 April.)

ATLANTIS OF THE NORTH

Doggerland, mentioned previously in this column, and often tagged as ‘Britain’s Atlantis’, is a submerged landmass

beneath what is today’s North Sea. It was drowned circa 6,000 BC due to sea level rise caused by ice melt after the last Ice Age. Fishermen, oil and gas companies, have from time to time brought up random bits and pieces showing that there was land there in the deep, then more formal sediment samples have provided pollen and other environmental evidence that suggest that the now submerged areas would have once been great landscapes of plants (especially woodland) and animals. If animals, then the question has been, did humans ever roam this land prior to its inundation?

Now, since May this year, teams from English and Belgian universities are making more organised studies of the lost land using the latest sound wave technology. And it is already bearing results. Homing in on what may have been a human habitation site 25 miles (40km) out to sea from England’s east coast, alongside a former riverbed (dubbed ‘South River’) in Doggerland, the researchers have recovered a sediment sample containing artefacts: a large worked hammerstone used for making stone tools, and a shard of flint sliced off from a stone tool during manufacture. Such items may not seem much to the untrained eye, but they tell archaeologists that these are proof of human activity in the Mesolithic era, possibly dating back to 8,000 BC or earlier. The samples were recovered from near what seems to be a flint deposit, and researchers think they have identified two tool-making bases on either side of the South River. The next stage of the survey will involve an unmanned mini-submarine, and, eventually, divers. *BBC News, New York Post, 12 June 2019.*



CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

239: HAIR TODAY...

“Horrible disaster in the time of Julius Cæsar; remains from it not reaching this earth till the time of the Bishop of Cloyne” – Fort, *Books*, p66.

Julius got short shrift in my previous surveys (FT231:21, 232:21) of Roman emperors, mainly because in titular terms he wasn’t one.

These amends are based mainly on his biographies by Plutarch and Suetonius. Cæsar’s own Commentaries on his Civil and Gallic Wars, save on military matters, are personally reticent, being written in the third person (‘Cæsar’, not ‘I’).

Literary oddity: both biographies have their opening chapters missing, hence the uncertainty over his precise year of birth (c. 100 BC).

Of course, great things were expected of one whose birth was heralded by a polydactyl horse, which he long treasured, though unlike Caligula never planned to appoint his favourite steed consul.

‘Cæsar’ was a nickname. Pliny (*Natural History*, bk7 ch9 para47) says he was cut from his mother Aurelia’s womb – hence our ‘Cæsarian section’. Here, though, time to Call the Midwife. This procedure was confined to dead mothers; Aurelia survived the birth for many years.

The *Augustan History* (*Life of Aelius*, ch2 para3) offers a gallimaufrey of other explanations: he killed an elephant (*cæsai*, in Moorish) in battle; he had bright grey eyes; he was preternaturally vigorous; he had a thick head of hair at birth.

Apropos this last, in adulthood he was quite bald, an embarrassment he tried to conceal with comb-overs and triumphal laurels – naturally, with my moniker, I have to say “Bald-wins” – to deflect his rivals’ jokes.

He was also mocked for bodily depilation, including what is known as ‘a shaven asshole’, this last connected with the lasting charge that he had effected a pact with the King of Bithynia by allowing the latter to bugger him.

Now you’ll understand my title.

At his Roman triumph, he was ridiculed for this in one of his soldiers’ ribald marching songs. Another counterpointed this with jokes on his womanising in Gaul – a third ditty taunted him for making them live on wild cabbages during these



campaigns – Cæsar himself was famously indifferent to fancy food and abstemious with booze. Hence, an enemy’s comment that he was “the only sober man to wreck the constitution”.

Likewise, his contrasting sexual images – he had several wives and shagged various other Eastern queens before Cleopatra – were unimprovably summed up by another Roman wag: “Cæsar is every wife’s husband, every husband’s wife.”

If this sounds like tabloid fare, that suits the man who gave Rome its first newspaper (*Acta Diurna* = ‘Daily Doings; cf. FT293:23).

Having as a youth dodged liquidation by earlier dictator Sulla, he fled to the East, being captured by pirates whom he awed by threatening them with death rather than begging for mercy – once ransomed, he hunted them down and crucified the lot – you didn’t mess with Cæsar.

“But Brutus says he was ambitious” (*Julius Caesar*, Act 3 Scene 2). Bill S. got that right – the play’s not one of his best and, anyway, should really be called *Brutus*. Cæsar famously wept before a statue of Alexander the Great: “At this age, he’d conquered the world; I’ve done nothing!” When a colleague laughingly wondered if a Gallic hamlet they were passing had its

political battles, Cæsar replied, “I’d rather be Number One there than Number Two in Rome.”

One of his many regrettably lost books was a poem, *The Journey*, composed and dictated to an amanuensis during a four-day ride on horseback – could Carol Ann Duffy do this? – Ted Hughes, maybe.

Cæsar opened his *Gallic Wars* with the plain “All Gaul is divided into three parts” – like Plato’s soul or the male genitalia. Bernard Shaw remarked of this, “Neither true nor interesting but at least intelligible.” When filing his final report to the Senate (Pliny, *NH*, bk. ch25 para96) Cæsar claimed he had killed 1,192,000 men, women, and children – how did he manage so precise a tally?

That fateful March game of Ides and Seek was predictably heralded with ultra-spectacular portents: celestial warriors, comets, lightning from clear skies, talking cattle, volcanic eruptions – you name it.

Plus workmen demolishing old tombs found an inscription predicting his assassination.

No surprise, then, that the number of stab-wounds should be that ever-mysterious 23, a frequent FT topic.

‘Cæsar’s Comet’, described in its Wikipedia entry as the brightest one in recorded history, was not (as sometimes said) Halley’s – the latter appeared in 12 BC (connected by some with the Christian Star of Bethlehem) and during Nero’s reign in AD 66.

Et tu, Brute? must be history’s most famous dying words. But, did Cæsar actually utter them? Other versions have him Greekly groan “And you, my son?” – perhaps inspired by the rumour that Brutus was actually his son sired in an intrigue with the latter’s mother Servile – unlikely, Cæsar being only 15 at the time – he was no stranger to paternity suits: a friend, Oppius, rushed out a pamphlet denying that Cleopatra’s baby boy Cæsarion was his. A third has him only producing “certain sounds” – doubtless the Latin equivalent of “Aaaaaargh!”

None of these hold a candle to the Kenneth Williams Cæsar (*Carry On, Cleo*) lament, often described as the funniest film one-liner: “Infamy! Infamy! They’ve all got it in for me!”



Here's looking at you...

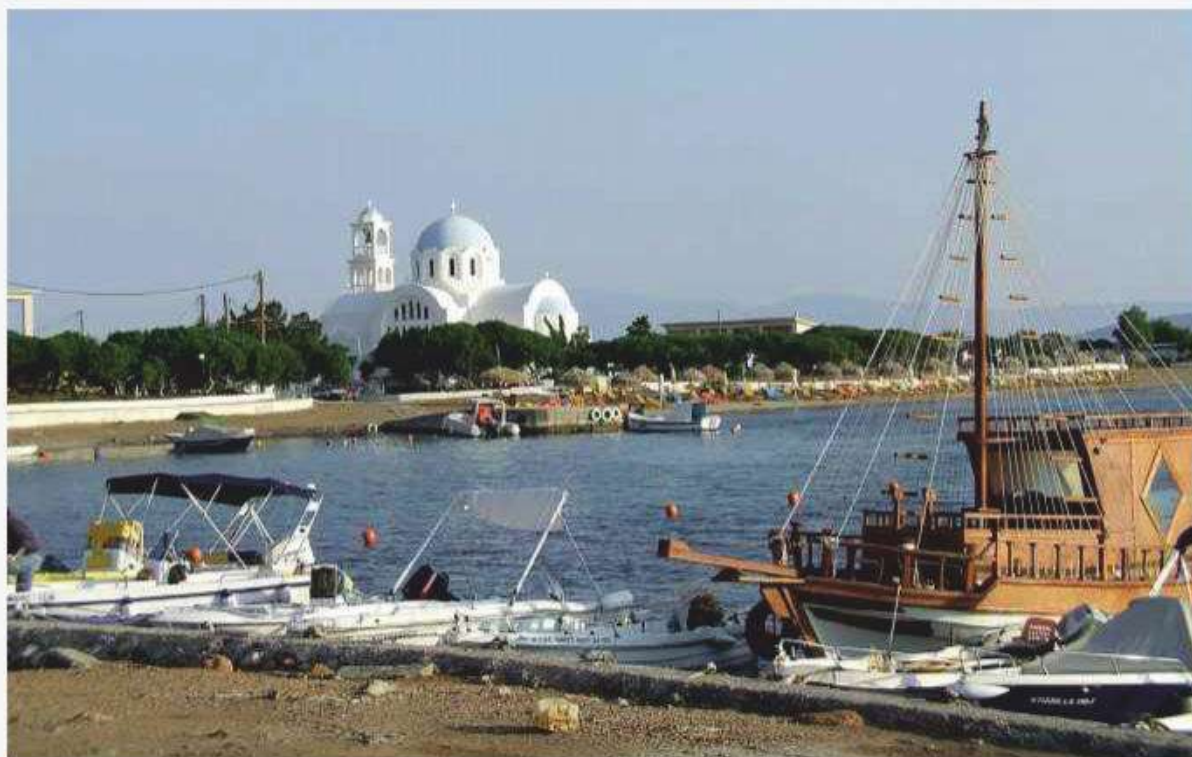
ALAN MURDIE finds that belief in the evil eye still haunts a tranquil Greek island

The idea that witchcraft could explain ghostly influences in daily life was a favourite theory in vogue with Early Modern scholars and scientific thinkers of the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Among rural populations around the world such a belief persists to this day. In spring 2019, I discovered the extent of such survival in Europe during a visit to the island of Agistri, near Aegina, Greece. So potent do evil eye beliefs remain here among some older people that mere mention of them can be sufficient to shut down any enquiry into local ghosts and folklore.

If you want a tranquil time, Agistri is a place in Greece to be recommended. One of the minor gems of the Saronic Islands, it is little known and frequently bypassed by the more cosmopolitan holidaymakers, thus sparing its charms from the worst effects of mass tourism. With only three villages and the majority of its surface still covered by pine and beech forests, the island qualifies as a mini-wilderness in parts, excellent for gentle hiking and relaxation. Arriving at the end of April, I was pleased to find it little changed from my first visit in 2004.

The starting point for making my enquiries was the Agistri Club, a versatile and long-established English-run hotel, situated on the outskirts of the port. Providing comfortable lodgings, it qualifies as the last building on the north-eastern tip of the island, bordered by both beach and woodlands with its terrace for diners commanding one of the finest views on the island, over the sea to Aegina. On the evening of my arrival it was particularly blessed by the sudden and unexpected appearance of two dolphins gambolling in a lesiurely way through the gentle waves of the bay, to the delight of early evening guests and diners. But as MR James says in his story 'No 13', I am not writing a guidebook.

At the Agistri Club, I consulted owners, Bryan Robinson and his wife Henriette. Presiding over the daily running of the Club (which Bryan helped found back in 1982) together with their staff, they provide a major source of local news, intelligence and gossip concerning happenings across the island. On previous stays, I had never raised the subject of ghosts, which I can only ascribe to the small size of Agistri and the fact that once immersed in the landscape of Homer any talk of ghosts is often overshadowed or trumped by the still vibrant images of the deities of the classical era – the immortal Olympian gods, colossal monsters



ABOVE: The bright sunlight of Agistri seems to have banished tales of ghosts, but other beliefs linger.

On mention of the evil eye, my previously communicative hosts clammed up

and heroes of Greek mythology. Another pervasive influence on Greek attitudes to the supernatural is the thriving Orthodox Church, whose splendid annual Easter festivities featuring fireworks and candle-lit processions had just ended. Set against these, and when bathing in the beaming sunlight, ordinary phantoms seem paler and more insubstantial than usual. So I was not surprised when Bryan could not recall ever hearing any talk of ghosts on the island, but Henriette confirmed belief in the evil eye. This is reflected in displays of painted concentric turquoise and blue circles around a black centre point, appearing on decorative jewellery and charms worn by many people. The emblem represents a stylised eye, the symbol proving ubiquitous once you become aware of it. The design is used on many fashion accessories today throughout Greece, even if younger people only dimly grasp its original significance. (For more on the evil eye in Greece, see Jeff Koyen, "The Evil Eye", **FT160:34-39**.) Accordingly, I was advised that if I wanted to find out about ghosts and anything

supernatural on Agistri, it was best to go and speak directly with the friendly locals.

This is sound advice which, previously, I have found always seems to work around the world. I had no reason to believe that the universals of a smile, genuine interest and a kind word would not be appreciated on Agistri (the other great social passport is money, but obviously you can't pay for testimony if it is to have any value). Here I was conscious of following in the footsteps of an early 20th century folklore collector John Cuthbert Lawson (1874-1935), a distinguished classicist and Fellow of Pembroke College. Interested in the question of how much of the religion of the ancients survived among the customs and superstitions of the Greek peasantry into modern times, he became convinced the echoes of archaic beliefs and practices could still be detected. His book *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (1910) contains a wealth of first-hand observations and anecdotes from two years' fieldwork and remains a valuable source (even if his ingenious conclusions are rejected by more recent scholarship). He even hints at the existence of real supernatural forces on Greek islands, telling of seeing the flitting life-like apparition of a nymph in an olive grove during one of his forays. Lawson was no stranger to ghosts, holding the lease of Abbey House in Cambridge, the most haunted house in the city, where he had personal experience of

BLOGJORDAN / CREATIVE COMMONS

manifestations and seeing its 'Grey Lady'.

With hindsight I wish I had re-read Lawson before setting out to the village of Megalachori. The village was reached after a pleasant sea front walk of just over half an hour. Arriving at a particular family taverna (which I shall not identify here) I was soon served coffee by an elderly Agistri couple and their English-speaking daughter.

On expressing my interest in local history and lore, the family were initially most helpful and expansive, telling me how after being mine and quarry in classical times, the island was virtually abandoned until the late mediæval period. Then a community came over from neighbouring islands and established the first settlement at the nearby village of Liminaria. Life was hard and made increasingly precarious by repeated raids from pirates seeking loot and captives. Consequently, in the 1820s the original village was dismantled down to its foundations, with the villagers abandoning the coastal areas and heading into the interior of the island where they camouflaged their new houses and churches.

Predictably, mention of pirates prompts fantasies of buried treasure (all so far undiscovered) and even a wildly unhistorical story that the infamous Mediterranean pirate and admiral Barbarossa (c. 1471-1546) is buried in a local well!

Talk of the deserted settlement provided a good opening to discussing ghosts. The old village site is reputedly haunted, with visitors complaining of a brooding atmosphere and a sense of being watched. Another haunted place is a chapel along the road to Aponissos, where the voices of the dead can be heard on certain nights, "So people say".

This all seemed very promising, and by this stage I had been joined by some English-speaking friends and part-time residents who know Agistri very well. With conversation and beverages flowing ever more freely, I was induced to start making some hand-written notes. And in this I failed to follow the advice provided by Lawson over a century ago.

As Lawson observed himself, "The formal interview with paper and pencil is in my opinion a mistake... The peasant who honestly believes the superstitions and scrupulously observed the customs which he may happen to speak is silenced at once by the sight of the note-book". It vindicates advice I was given years ago about collecting ghost stories from elderly villagers in rural East Anglia, "If you want to buy a pig, talk about the weather". But the really sensitive issue proved to be the evil eye.

On mention of this my previously communicative hosts clammed up. The convivial atmosphere evaporated in an



ABOVE: The abandoned village of Liminaria.

LEFT: An evil eye charm doubles as a key ring.

the occupational hazards of gathering oral evidence of any sort. With folklore collection, there is a time and a place for everything, and local nuances are very important.

Beliefs which confer on the human eye some dangerous quality that strikes out and works an injury upon any person or inanimate object standing in view are not confined to Greece but were declared as thriving throughout the world in the middle of the last century (see the popular survey by Edward Gifford, *The Evil Eye*, 1958).

In Greece the idea of an evil eye was magnified to grotesque and apocalyptic levels by investigator Angelos Tanagras in 1929, clothed in the jargon of psychical research. Tanagras proposed that apparent precognition was to be explained as a slowly acting form of psychokinesis, "an unsuspected factor, terrible and chiefly unconscious, which depends on our mysterious subconscious and acts according to our unavowed impulses, appears to exert a 'fatal' influence upon lives and destinies" (In his book *Le Destin et La Chance*, translated into English as *Psychophysical Elements in Parapsychological Traditions*, 1967). Under this model an individual wanting something to happen, mentally pictures it and then 'foresees' it happening, then unconsciously causes it, rather as in science fiction films such as *Forbidden Planet* (1956) and *The Medusa Touch* (1978). Thus, premonitions are fulfilled by PK acting on other brains or on physical systems, a precognised road or railway accident is realised by the dreamer who through PK tampers with the steering gear, engine or brain of the driver, triggering the accident. Tanagras termed

instant and I saw a look of profound unease and growing resentment crossing the face of the elderly mother. This was at once picked up by her daughter who suddenly snapped "They know nothing!" and making it clear if her parents did, it was certainly not to be shared with me. Sensing that this sudden reversal and souring of the previous communicative atmosphere heralded even more negative reactions and upset for everyone, I abandoned my enquiries, quickly moving conversation to more mundane subjects. The previous good humour slowly returned and I did not broach paranormal topics again.

In one sense I was not surprised; one has to accept such moments when collecting any kind of oral testimony. Over many years I have become used to witnesses who change or alter their stories (both in legal and psychical research contexts) or witnesses who subsequently no longer remember or even deny the entirety of their original statements. These are some of



GHOSTWATCH

this power 'psychobolie' in an attempt to find a universal theory applicable to all psychic manifestations. But it fails to explain why people might wish distant volcanoes to erupt or tsunamis to occur or why widely reviled figures such as Hitler and his ilk did not die much sooner, since their deaths must have been fervently wished by millions.

As my Agistri experience shows, ghost hunters and folklorists may still find such beliefs around the world today. In Latin American countries where witchcraft is accepted as a day-to-day reality, informants will garrulously speak of such powers, often recommending where witches may be found should one want their services, black or white! A similar enthusiasm for discussing the topic is displayed in some Asian countries. In contrast, in Africa and the Middle East more reluctance may be shown when speaking on such topics, unless a dispensation or permission to do so is issued by a local priest or imam. Since some of these countries still retain penalties for sorcery and witchcraft in their legal codes, such inhibitions are understandable. Many languages retain phrases that express the equivalents of a 'penetrating gaze', 'a withering glance' or a 'dirty look' or to 'look daggers', harkening back to such ancient beliefs. Even speaking of such things can be considered unlucky.

In the UK, ghost hunters and folklorists have come across examples, with such survivals being most prevalent in eastern England. Country writer and journalist James Wentworth Day (1899-1983) told in his *Essex Ghosts* (1974) of once going to interview a well-known and friendly blacksmith in the village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy, taking a photographer with him. Upon seeing the camera, the normally mild-mannered blacksmith flew into a rage, shouting "It's the evil eye" and demanding its instant removal from his forge, threatening to throw a hammer at them if they did not comply. The same year Enid Porter, curator of the Cambridge Museum of Folk Life, referred to "an East Anglian village which must remain anonymous" where one woman was said to possess the evil eye, being blamed for accidents and misfortune among children and neighbours (*The Folklore of East Anglia*, 1974).

In Cambridgeshire and the Fens, some stories of bewitchment from the late 19th and early 20th centuries sound more like poltergeist manifestations. For example, in October 1804 at Sawston, near Cambridge, strange events occurred at the home of a Mr and Mrs Thomas and Susannah Adams. A letter from Jane Huddleston of Sawston Hall recorded how:

"Mrs Adams since last Sunday has had her gown torn every day in a manner she could not account for... so it continued



ABOVE: Stamatina, who once worked at the Agistri Club, was able to banish the effects of the evil eye.

until she had put on five. She went to Mrs Murphil's house. No-one was there but Mrs M and Sally Cooper [a 13-year-old girl]. She told of her misfortune and shewed her the gown, which was quite whole when she sat down, upon rising to their astonishment it was slit in several directions. She put on six gowns on Thursday and they were all rent."

The phenomena were not confined to Mrs Adams; "Almost everyone that has been in the house have had their clothes torn, men and women, old Adams' coats, etc..." The clothes of a niece and a maidservant were "shivered to rags", and two witnesses saw one piece of a garment "drop off and not a person near or touching it."

Other victims included "two gentlemen" and a Mrs James who "was so frightened she ran out of the house and was very near fainting." Similar assaults afflicted Mrs Adams's 15-year-old niece, who "had only the body part of her gown remaining, the skirts having dropped off as she moved about." Local belief ascribed this to witchcraft and curiosity-seekers flocked to the village. Specimens of the torn clothes were later exhibited at Cambridge and the attacks ceased thereafter. (*Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore*, 1969, by Enid Porter).

Charles Fort, in his last book *Wild Talents* (1931), cites another Cambridgeshire case from 1923, the Gorefield poltergeist, near Wisbech, attributed to witchcraft by locals. As recently as December 2013, when I visited a reportedly haunted flat in Peterborough, residents told me they feared black magic by a hostile neighbour might be to blame.

Later that same day on Agistri I hiked up to the abandoned village site, finding

the remains on a small plateau and slope among the hills, shaded by a profusion of towering trees. The crumbling stone walls and scattered boulders seemed peaceful enough in the late afternoon sunshine, though it might well prove different after nightfall.

I finally rounded off my enquiries back at the Agistri Club, where I shared details of what had happened earlier. I was reassured and told no lasting upset would have been caused, with such superstitions only to be expected and being a very minor aspect of community life. Fortunately, popular fears turn out to be regularly allayed by the activities of other islanders claiming gifts to exorcise evil eye influences; the Agistri Club itself had once employed such a lady named Stamatina. She had worked in the kitchens and was the source of many of the Club's successful home-cooked dishes.

Stamatina was also credited locally for being able to banish the effects of the evil eye by magical means. Charging a small sum (sometimes waived entirely), her routine technique of dispelling evil eye afflictions involved performing a simple ritual, releasing a droplet of olive oil into a small retsina glass full of water in the presence of a sufferer. Moreover, in emergencies, Stamatina could bring relief to victims remotely, over the telephone. She had many clients and also promoted the use of various charms that she maintained would inhibit any malevolent power. She died 10 years ago at the age of 80 and is buried at the cemetery of Milos. Her powers are still celebrated on Agistri, as is the Club itself for its commitment to equal opportunities in so readily having employed a neighbourhood white witch without any qualms.

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KARL SHUKER hears news of feline cryptids from South America, and an out-of-place marten

VENEZUELAN MYSTERY CATS

In various of my mystery cat writings, I have documented such creatures from several different South American countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Ecuador, but recently I have received brand-new information from two separate correspondents in relation to feline cryptids hailing from Venezuela. On 19 June 2019, Michael Merchant from Maine, USA, presented me with the following details via Facebook: "When I was in Venezuela the Pemon Indians told me of two undescribed species of felines they were familiar with in the local jungle. One they said was huge, the size of an African lion and they were very fearful of, saying to see it was to die. The other was a smaller, cougar-sized cat that travelled in packs, with the younger ones travelling in the trees, the adults tending more to the ground, hunting as a group."

Although only one scientifically recognised species of modern-day wild cat, the lion, is known to be a social species and hunt in groups, Michael's account is the third one known to me that features a social cryptozoological cat, adding to two from Ecuador and Peru respectively. However, it is the only example in which the youngsters and adults are segregated into arboreal and terrestrial hunters. Very strange indeed.

My second piece of information regarding Venezuelan mystery cats came from a correspondent who prefers to be identified publicly merely by the user name Bradypus Tamias, so this is how I shall refer to him here. On 9 June 2019, I received an email from him containing these details: "I was recently looking for possible newer information



about the unnamed 'sabre-toothed cats' reported from Ecuador and Colombia, and tried using some Spanish-language keywords in my search. This led me to a video, entitled 'EL WAIRARIMA: Monstruos del Amazonas Parte 2 [Criptozoologia]Terror', which revealed two interesting pieces of information.

"The first is that these cats do actually have a name, at least in Venezuela: 'tigre dantero' (dancing tiger) or 'wairarima'. According to ethnological books and blog posts, this is the name used in Venezuela, and the cat it's applied to is apparently larger than a jaguar, but the Spanish-speaking online cryptozoological community seem to have adopted the term to refer to those nameless, sub-jaguar-sized fanged cats reported from the montane forests. You might already have known about these names, but I've never seen them mentioned in English-language sources before, nor had I read that the cryptids themselves were also reported from Venezuela."

In fact, these names were new to

me too, as was the information that the cats themselves seemingly inhabited Venezuela as well as Colombia and Ecuador. But this was not all. On 11 June 2019, Bradypus emailed me the following additional details: "I feel I have to say that the name *wairarima/tigre dantero* may not always refer to the fanged cats. Descriptions in (modern) ethnological books about the Pemon Indians, and an old description from William Beebe, make it sound very much like the Ecuadorean *pama-yawa* [a huge black mystery cat] (or just an oversized melanistic jaguar); big, dark grey, and semi-aquatic, with no mention of fangs or a short tail. Also, it seems that 'tigre dantero' might actually mean 'tapir tiger', just like *pama-yawa*, instead of 'dancing tiger', as I translated it in my last email. On the other hand, a 1991 Venezuelan sighting described the *wairarima* as light brown, with large fangs, a short tail, and stocky front legs. This is obviously very different (and very much like a sabre-tooth) but it was explicitly identified by the eyewitness, a Pemon Indian, as a *wairarima*. So I'm not quite sure what's going on with it."

Evidently, there is some degree of terminological controversy occurring here, but regardless of what its subject is called locally, the 1991 sighting certainly delineates a felid bearing more than a passing resemblance to a bona fide sabre-toothed cat, all of which officially died out at least 10,000 years ago, at least according to the fossil record. It also assists in adding Venezuela to the list of South American countries in which mystery cat forms have been reported. *Michael Merchant, Facebook, 19 June 2019; 'Bradypus Tamias', pers. comms, 9+11 June 2019.*

DEVONSHIRE'S MYSTERY MARTEN

A comparable degree of contention also surrounds the recent discovery of a dead pine marten *Martes martes* in Devon, an English county where this famously rare and elusive arboreal mustelid officially died out many decades ago. According to media reports, shepherd Ash Symons discovered its body (pictured at right) on land where he lives and works, in Teignbridge, on the south side of Dartmoor, Devon, on 22 June 2019. It had apparently been killed by a car. This unexpected find led to speculation that there must be an undiscovered surviving



population of pine martens in Devon. However, the truth was even more unexpected. Jonathan Downes from the

Centre of Fortean Zoology contacted Symons for more information, and learnt to his great surprise that when Symons had taken the marten's carcass to officials to be scanned for microchips, it turned out "that the creature had been transported from Scotland [where there is a well-known surviving population] to Wales, where it had been released" – but how it then made its way southward to Devon where it subsequently died is still a mystery. www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/pine-marten-devon-rare-found-3009872 23 June; <http://forteanzoology.blogspot.com/2019/07/doing-right-thing.html> 3 July 2019.



CRIMINAL CROPPERS

Bungling burglars, deluded dope dealers and hopeless house-breakers are among this month's least wanted...

- Firefighters freed a burglary suspect stuck for seven hours in a chicken takeaway shop's extractor unit in Handsworth, Birmingham. The man got stuck at 2am on 2 November 2017, and was freed at 9am the following morning when neighbours heard his cries for help and called police. PC Matthew Willcocks said: "The fire brigade had to use the jaws of life to pull back the casing to release him". A 45-year-old local man was arrested. *Guardian*, 3 Nov 2017.

- A burglar who tried to break into a storage unit at night on 25 February was chased away by up to 80,000 angry bees after leaping over an 8ft (2.4m) fence and crash-landing on hives. He scaled the fence around the compound near Tower Bridge, London, in an apparent bid to pinch tools and machinery; but the boxes, each housing 20,000 insects cared for by Bermondsey Street Bees, were knocked over. Owner Dale Gibson, 61, sent the raider a message: "The bees were sad you left so quickly and empty-handed – they hope the swellings go down soon." *D.Mirror*, 6 Mar; *Eve. Standard*, 12 Mar 2019.

- Burglars used a blowtorch to break into an ATM machine in Florida, but they never hit the jackpot. Video footage shows the two men entering the Boardwalk on Okaloosa Island on 31 May. One was armed with a crowbar and acted as the lookout while the other took the blowtorch to the ATM. Instead of cutting the ATM with the blowtorch, the would-be thief welded the metal parts shut and the pair left with nothing. *[AP]* 5 June 2019.

- Last March, Terry Sawyers, 39, walked into a lamppost and knocked himself out. Police found him lying unconscious on a pavement in the City of London with a gash on his forehead. In a bag nearby were four laptops, seven cameras, a mobile phone and £1,000 in luncheon vouchers which he had



ABOVE: The unfortunate felon who spent seven hours trapped in a takeaway shop's extraction vent. BELOW: The toilet paper roses left by a mysterious home invader.

stolen in three burglaries that day. Sawyers, of East Ham, east London, who had 79 previous convictions, got 16 months. *Sun*, *D.Express*, 4 May 2019.

- An Israeli man robbed two banks in Beersheba armed with an avocado he claimed was a grenade. Painting the avocado black, he used it to threaten cashiers, who handed over 30,000 shekels (£6,600). The 47-year-old, who disguised himself with shades and an eye patch, was arrested. Laurence Vonderdell, 50, held up a Barclays Bank in Bournemouth on 25 March, "brandishing" a banana inside a carrier bag and telling a cashier: "This is a stickup. Give me the cash." He fled with £1,000 in £20 notes, but later gave himself up. He was jailed for 14 months. *D.Telegraph*, 11+18 June 2019.

- James Longden, 30, broke into his neighbour's flat in Chester while he was at work, taking his laptop, jewellery and clothing. The unnamed victim later discovered his stolen possessions for sale on eBay. After winning a bid for his own watch, he made contact with the seller and found it was his neighbour. Longden, unaware who his buyer was, went to meet him to deliver the watch, only to be greeted by police officers. The vast majority of the stolen items were then discovered in Longden's flat. He was jailed for two years and four months. *D.Express*, 25 Jan 2019.



- Rowdy Lapham, owner of Gold Hardwood Floors, arrived at work to find his store in Grand Rapids, Michigan, had been burgled – but the only things missing were some 'gold bars' made of foam rubber, featuring the company's logo. Employee Nick Butler said the thief might have walked past a window, seen the stack of bars and "thought, 'Wow, someone forgot to put these gold bars away'." The squeezable bars were actually for stress relief, as the company's motto is "Stress-free flooring". (Sydney) *D.Telegraph*, 26 May 2018.

- A fugitive on Canada's Most Wanted list led police to his doorstep after announcing where he was living in a defiant Facebook message to a TV station publicising his case. Jessie Dean Kowalchuk, 27, spotted his photo on the website of TV station CFJC Today in Kamloops, and sent

a taunting Facebook message, saying he was in neighbouring Alberta province. "News flash morons I'm in Edmonton and not coming back," he wrote. Police were notified of his location and arrested him. (Queensland) *Courier Mail*, 17 May 2019.

- A dope dealer was caught after stamping blocks of hashish with his own name. Steven Best, 30, was jailed for 42 months after admitting possessing drugs with intent to supply. Some were found in a lock-up he owned, the rest at his home in Sompting, West Sussex, and on his yacht in Brighton Marina. *Metro*, 17 June 2019.

- A man who had just robbed a bank in Waterville, Maine, ran across four lanes of traffic and a restaurant parking lot before slipping on ice and dropping his gun and the money in front of a state police special agent. A gust of wind swept the greenbacks across the parking lot while the man was arrested. The weapon turned out to be a BB gun. *[AP]* 12 Feb 2019.

- When Nate Roman, 44, came home from work on 15 May, he could tell that a stranger had been in his house on a typical suburban tree-lined street in Marlborough, Massachusetts. He said it was possible that he forgot to lock his back door, because whoever entered his house didn't break anything to gain entry, but neither did they take anything. They had neatly made the beds, vacuumed the rugs and scrubbed the toilets. They even crafted ornate origami roses on the toilet paper rolls in the bathrooms. Every room in his house was cleaned, except for the kitchen. "We have not received any reports similar to this in other locations, and we have no suspects at this time," said Police Sergeant Daniel Campbell. "It's funny now, but didn't feel funny at the time," Roman said. "I kept the toilet paper roses as souvenirs." *Boston Globe*, 23 May 2019.



FALLING FROM THE SKY | Mexican city covered in ice, France hit by giant hailstones, frozen stowaway plummets to Earth



ULISES RUIZ / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A policeman stands next to vehicles buried in hail in the eastern area of Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico, on 30 June 2019

MONSTER HAIL

A heavy hailstorm on 30 June left six suburbs in the Mexican city of Guadalajara carpeted in a thick layer of ice, up to 5ft (1.5m) thick in places, half-burying vehicles. Hundreds of houses were damaged. There was also flooding and fallen trees, but no one is thought to have been hurt. Pedestrians struggled to cross the mounds of slush, children tried to toboggan down the pavement and soldiers used bulldozers to clear roads.

The storm hit very quickly, between about 1:50am (6:50am GMT) and 2:10am local time, when the air temperature dropped suddenly from 22°C (72°F) to 14°C (57°F). The city had been basking in temperatures of more than 30°C (86°F). The hail probably melted on contact due to the high temperatures, forming

a layer of water upon which more hail could land and float. This combination of water and hail likely moved down a slope, with obstacles such as buildings blocking the flow and allowing more ice to accumulate on top. Although hailstorms are not uncommon in the mountain-fringed city of five million people, which is 5,000ft (1,520m) above sea level, no one can recall anything on this scale, with entire streets becoming rivers of ice, paralysing transport for hours. The actual hailstones were relatively small, less than 1cm in diameter, and nothing like the golf-ball sized hail seen at times in severe storms in the US. *BBC News*, 1 July; *Times*, *D.Mail*, 2 July 2019.

- Hailstones the size of eggs battered the city of Chengde in Hebei, northern China, for

10 minutes on the night of 15 May, destroying homes, roofs and trees – though no casualties were reported. One video shows the tiles of a roof falling off piece by piece as the massive lumps of ice hit it. A man is seen clearing a road that had been completely covered with hail. The adverse weather also left batches of chestnut trees barren, another clip shows. “My chestnut trees are gone! No chestnuts for us to eat this year,” one woman was heard exclaiming. The thunderstorm also battered the Jinshanling section of the Great Wall. *dailymail.co.uk*, 16 May 2019.

- Storms on 15 June hurled hailstones the size of ping-pong balls on the crops of south-eastern France, prompting authorities to declare a state of “natural emergency”. The pellets bored holes through

protective netting to hammer the fruit below, turning much of it to pulp and putting farmers at risk of bankruptcy. Many lost 80 to 100 per cent of their crops. Worst hit was the Auvergne-Rhône-Alps region, known as the “orchard of France”. The hail also wreaked destruction on part of the Saint-Joseph vineyards and reportedly wiped out half of the Croze-Hermitage harvest, despite it being equipped with anti-hail devices. “In 35 years, I’ve never seen such violence,” said Pierre Combat, president of a wine inspection unit. A tourist was killed in the Haute-Savoie when a tree crashed on her camping vehicle and a woman drowned in Lake Geneva when her boat sank. The storm also damaged 465 boats taking part in a regatta on the lake. *Guardian*, 17 June; *D.Telegraph*, 18 June 2019.

FROZEN STOWAWAYS

John Baldock, an Oxford University graduate in his 20s, was sunbathing in his back garden in Offerton Road, Clapham, south London, on the afternoon of Sunday, 30 June, and fell asleep. At about 3.35pm he was awoken by a loud “whomp”. The frozen body of a man, wearing a blue shirt and denim jeans, had landed 3ft (90cm) away, shattering a concrete path and making a crater in the lawn. One neighbour said the impact was so loud they thought a bomb had gone off. A stowaway, described by a witness as “frozen like an ice block”, had fallen more than 3,500ft (1,070m) from a Kenya Airways flight from Nairobi as it approached Heathrow Airport. (A plane spotter who had been following the flight of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner on an app from Clapham Common had seen the body fall). It could have been much worse: had the body fallen two seconds later, it would have landed on a packed Clapham Common, just 300 yards away. On inspecting the aircraft, police found a bag containing food, water and clothing at the rear left landing gear. The 6,840km (4,250-mile) flight from Nairobi takes eight hours and 50 minutes. The stowaway would have been starved of oxygen and endured

temperatures of around minus 60°C at an altitude of 40,000ft (12,200m).

A witness looking out of a window said there was “blood all over the walls of the garden” adding: “I spoke to Heathrow. They said this happens once every five years.” In 2010, a 20-year-old man from Romania survived in the undercarriage of a private jet on a flight from Vienna to Heathrow. In 2012, Jose Matada fell to his death from a British Airways flight inbound from Angola. Mr Matada, originally from Mozambique, was found on the pavement in East Sheen on 9 September. An inquest into his death heard he is believed to have survived freezing temperatures for most of the 12-hour flight. Kikmet Komur, 32, froze to death in the landing gear compartment of a British Airways plane in July 2013. He was trying to enter the UK to see his girlfriend. Carlito Vale from Mozambique was found dead on the roof of notonthehighstreet.com’s headquarters on Kew Road, Richmond, having clung to the undercarriage of a British Airways plane in June 2015. A second man miraculously survived the same 11-hour flight from Johannesburg, South Africa, while hiding in the undercarriage of the plane. *D.Mirror, BBC News, Eve Standard, 2 July 2019.*



ABOVE: The force of the body falling from the Kenya Airways plane dented paving slabs and astro-turf in John Baldock’s garden in Clapham, south London.

240: CORNISH PASTIES



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HUNT EMERSON

The myth

The reason a traditional Cornish pasty has such a big edge on it is because the tin miners, who took the pasties to work with them, were likely to have traces of arsenic on their hands. They’d use the edge as a disposable handle, a safety zone between their hands and their mouths. They’d eat the pie, and chuck the handle. This had the added advantage of providing leftovers to propitiate the “knockers” – spirits or Little People who inhabited tin mines. In some versions, throwing away the pasty’s handle is explained by either arsenic or fairies; in others, by both.

The “truth”

To qualify as a true Cornish pasty, your pie must indeed be edged with an exaggerated, crimped ridge. But there’s no historic evidence to suggest that the ridges went uneaten. In fact, 19th century photographs of miners at their snap show the pasties being eaten from one end to the other, while the far end is held in the cloth or paper in which it was carried. The crimp has to be a strong one so as to seal in the juices and the steam, since an important part of pasty preparation is the post-baking period of resting, in which the ingredients continue to cook inside the pastry. The fold also provides structural strength and heat retention.

Sources

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Disclaimer

There are probably more arguments per minute about Cornish pasties than about any other topic on Earth. For instance, I refuse to accept that they traditionally held beef; you’re telling me early proletarians had meat as part of their daily diet? So feel free to send in your corrections, clarifications and prejudices.

Mythchaser

Did corsets really make Victorian women faint, asks a reader. Let your answers be unrestrained.



EXHIBITION REPORT

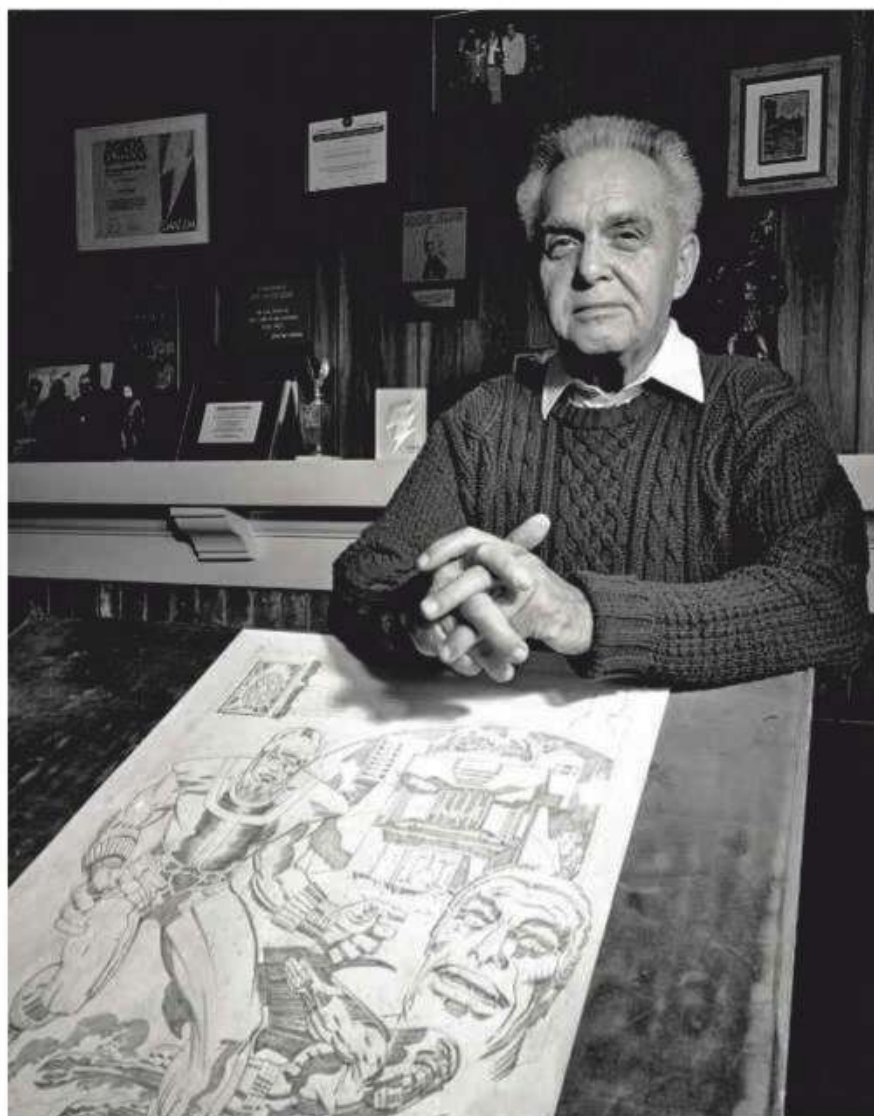
THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

PAUL GRAVETT reports from two current exhibitions in France celebrating the wartime service and subsequent career of comics legend Jack Kirby

It's hard to imagine a world without Jack Kirby's remarkable contributions. And yet in 1926, as a Jewish youngster in New York's Lower East Side named Jacob Kurtzberg, he had his first brush with death. "When I was nine years old, I got double pneumonia. I was supposed to die. What was going to save me?" His family was too poor to pay for medical treatment. "My mother could not give me up. She called in the rabbis and they all danced around my bed and chanted, 'Demon, come out of this boy. What is your name, demon?'... I just happened to pull out of it because... I don't know the reason. But you had to rely on something. God or at least pure chance." Jacob survived and a decade later achieved his dream of creating comics, in newspapers and in the new publishing phenomenon, comic books.

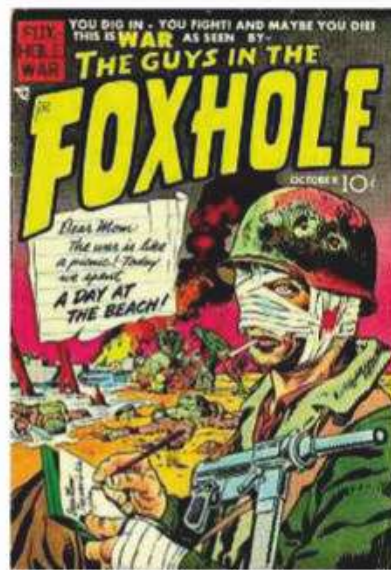
But he was not out of the fire yet. Seventy-five years ago this summer, Kirby was shipped from England across the Channel to Omaha Beach in Normandy as part of a US army squadron. On 23 August 1944, he stepped off the boat and onto French soil to join the Allies' ongoing push to liberate Nazi-occupied France. Around him lay the aftermath of the D-Day landings, some 11 weeks before, in which 4,414 Allied troops had died, 2,499 of them Americans. For the first time, the co-creator of Captain America was standing on the battlefield himself, not as his super-powered hero garbed in the stars and stripes, but as a vulnerable, flesh-and-blood GI, plunged into the raw reality of war. Would he even see his 27th birthday in five days' time?

Kirby's company was initially sent on to the frontline in



Verdun to join General Patton's push eastwards and to liberate two villages south of Metz, before reaching another, Dornot, on the west bank of the Moselle. During Kirby's terrifying combat experiences there were heavy losses and close calls, but what finally struck him down was trench-foot due to the severe cold and damp. Luckily, he was taken out of service on 14 November, although while he was being repatriated and treated en route in Paris and then Hereford, England, he narrowly escaped having both of his feet amputated.

Despite the pain, a wheelchair-bound Kirby agreed to the doctors' requests to make accurate reference drawings (since lost) of his



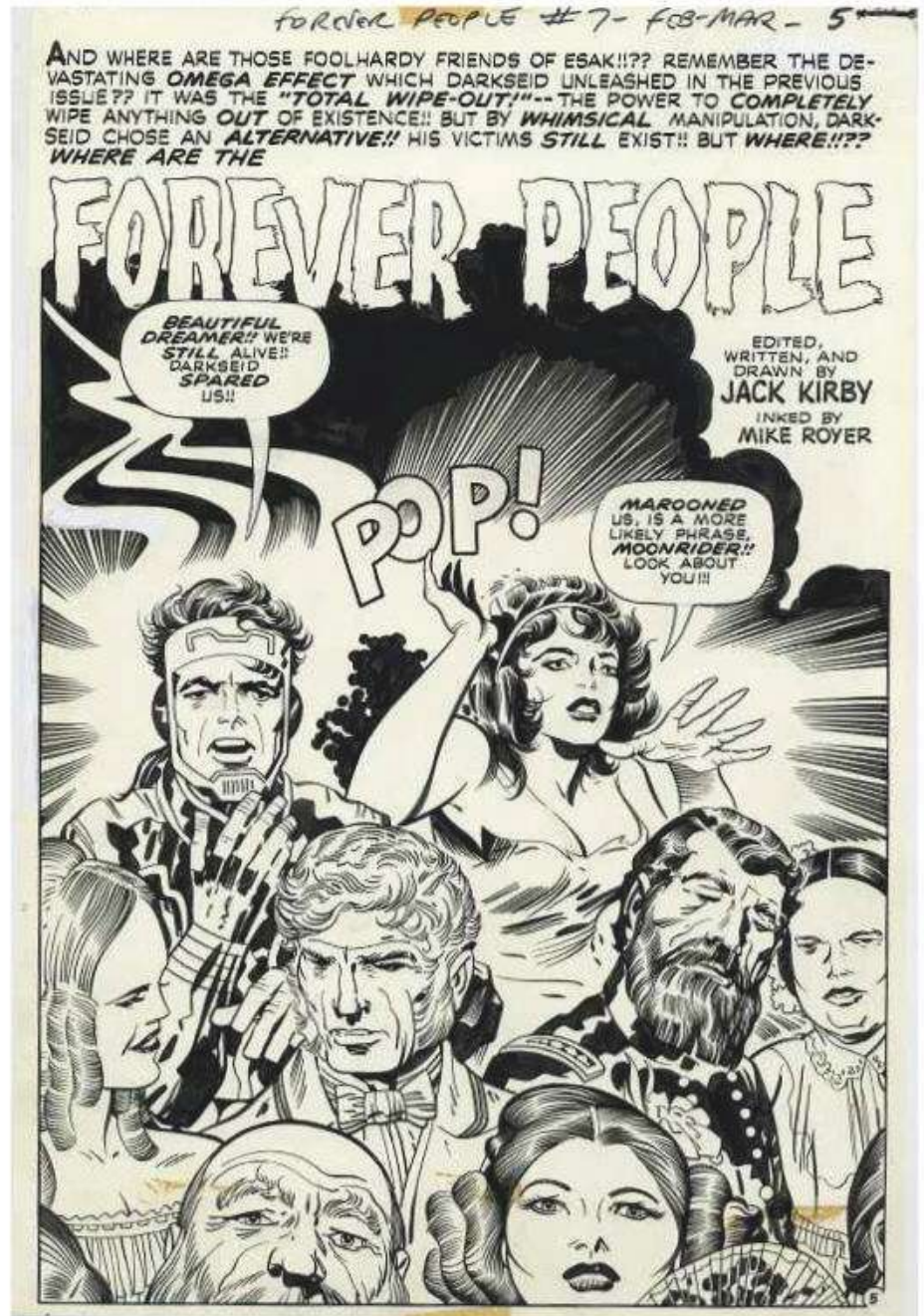
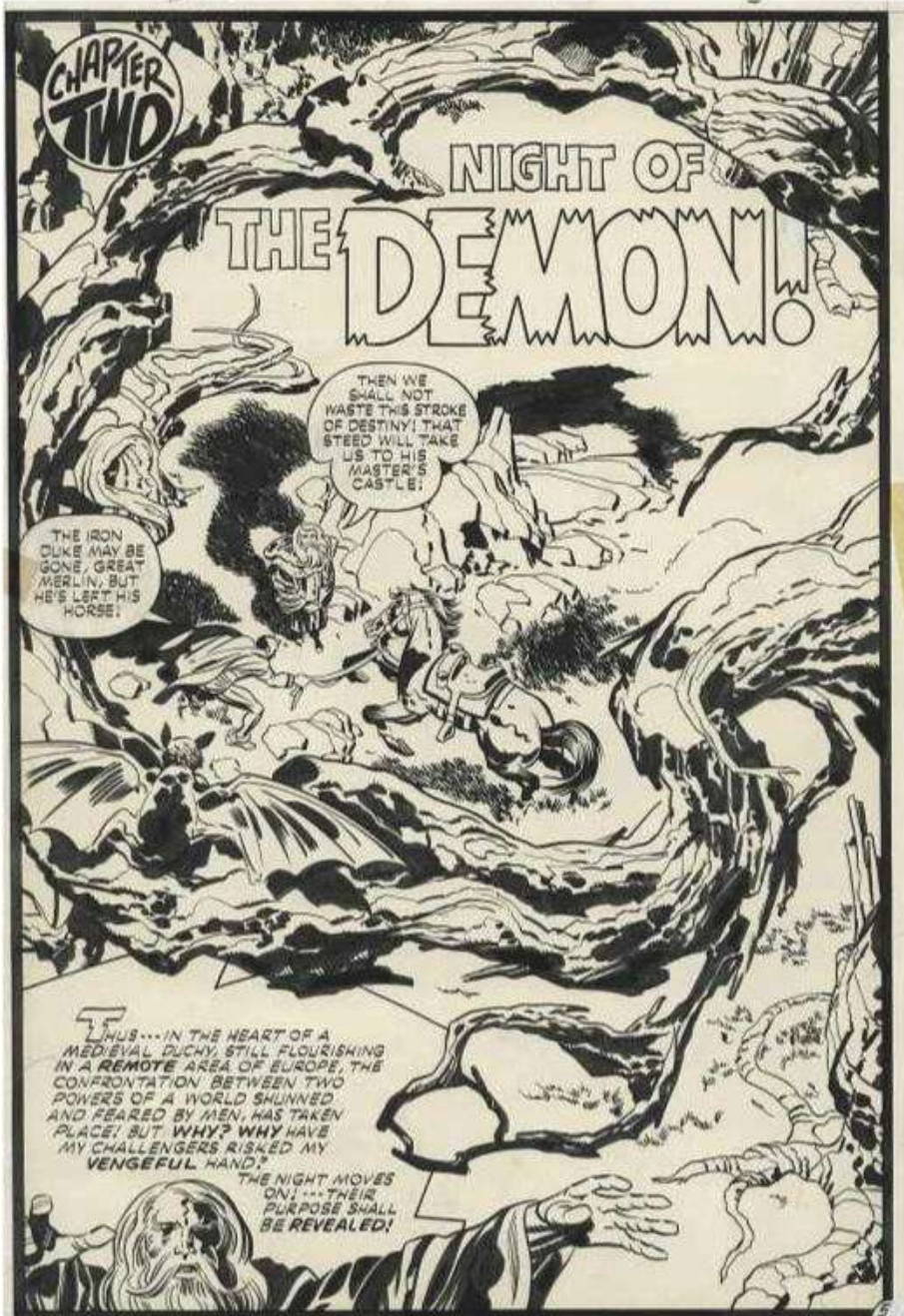
fellow soldiers' wounded feet. Eventually, Kirby came home and resumed his career, but what the war had made him see and do would profoundly change him and darken and deepen his work. It's no accident, for example, that 10

years later, for the first cover of *Foxhole* (Oct 1954), a comic book based on the testimonies of real-life soldiers, he drew a bloodied, bandaged D-Day survivor trying to write home: "Dear Mom: The war is like a picnic! Today we spent a day at the beach!"

Jack Kirby lived another 50 years, until 1994, working hard in comics and latterly also in animation, as an exceptional creative force, his expansive, visionary concepts often sparking from mythology and technology, pouring from pencil onto paper. Whether in war or Western, horror or humour, Kirby left almost no genre untried, even sharing with business partner Joe Simon in the invention of the romance genre in American comic books. From *Fantastic Four* in 1961 to *The Eternals* in 1976, Kirby went on to co-create, with Stan Lee, much of the Marvel Comics pantheon. Often conflicted, flawed yet principled, these superheroes have become icons worldwide, especially thanks to their recent blockbuster movie adaptations.

Kirby witnessed none of Marvel's 21st-century 'Cinematic Universe'. Lee hailed him as 'The King', though he was a king without a kingdom, owning hardly any of the copyrights to his (co-)creations. Only recently has he begun to receive proper acknowledgment in the comics and films, after an out-of-court settlement between his estate and Marvel's owners, Disney. Headhunted by their rivals, DC Comics, in the early Seventies, Kirby cut loose from Lee on his solo epic, four connected titles collectively called 'The Fourth World'. Here, he escalated World War II to an intergalactic scale, as godlike extraterrestrials from opposing planets bring their conflict to Earth and embroil fragile humankind. Its centrepiece, *New Gods*, unmistakably 'inspired' *Star Wars* and is also heading to the big screen.

Appropriately, Kirby is being commemorated this summer with two exhibitions in Normandy. In 'Kirby's War' at Bayeux's Médiathèque (till 24 August),



ABOVE LEFT: A page from *Demon* #5, January 1973, DC Comics, written and drawn by Jack Kirby and inked by Mike Royer. ABOVE RIGHT: The splash page from *Forever People* #7, March 1972, DC Comics, written and drawn by Kirby and inked by Royer. ABOVE RIGHT: Kirby's cover for *Foxhole* #1, October 1954, Charlton Comics.

every step of his military service and its impact on his subsequent œuvre, from *Boy Commandos* in the Forties to *The Losers* in the Seventies, are recounted in detail by Marc Azéma and Jean Depelley from *Passé Simple*. The pair have also produced an accompanying documentary. While there are no original artworks on display, the high-quality reproductions of comic-book covers and panels, and rare photos and drawings, including some of Kirby's illustrated letters home to his wife, make this show immersive and compelling.

Nearby in Cherbourg, as part of their Ninth Biennale of the Ninth Art (the French term for the comics medium), the Musée Thomas-Henry is presenting over 200 pieces of original

artwork (until 29 September) in *Jack Kirby: The Superhero Galaxy*, the largest exhibition ever staged in France about Kirby and his forebears, peers and successors. The opening gallery examines his formative influences in newspaper strips like *Popeye* and *Flash Gordon*. Most notable is the 1937 episode of Hal Foster's sumptuous mediæval Sunday page serial *Prince Valiant*, in which the hero uses a goose's plucked skin and claws to disguise his face as a demon and terrify a villain to death. This striking scene seems to have stayed with Kirby, because in 1972 he designed a very similar-looking monster to star in his DC horror series *The Demon*. Foster's own influences probably included

the Swedish silent supernatural documentary *Häxan* (1922), and Kirby may have also seen this himself when it was re-released in the US in 1968 as *Witchcraft Through the Ages*.

The following galleries in Cherbourg chart Kirby's trajectory from the Forties to the Eighties and his impact on other artists to this day. The King's sheer imaginative output month after month comes across when you see a whole wall filled with almost all 20 original pages from *Fantastic Four* #54 (Sept 1966), one of over 100 issues he worked on. Kirby is in full flow here as both writer and artist, drawing panel by panel in pencil and writing notes on the story in the margins for Stan Lee to dialogue and complete. Kirby's

cast includes African technocrat the Black Panther, hidden alien race the Inhumans and the resurrection of the legendary Prester John. Equally striking are two walls in the penultimate Fourth World gallery presenting an entire issue of *Forever People* and every page from 'Even Gods May Die', his prequel to the *New Gods* conclusion, *The Hunger Dogs*. Twenty-five years since his death, Kirby's legacy to popular culture is more vital and inspiring than ever.

Kirby's War: www.les7lieux.fr/les-temps-forts/66-l-exposition-evenement.

Jack Kirby: The Superhero Galaxy: www.cherbourg.fr/infos-services/culture-et-loisirs/musees/musee-thomas-henry/les-expositions-temporaires-1736.html.



MEDICAL BAG | This month's casebook of curiosities features amazing awakenings, an astonishing example of brain growth, and a prodigious case of polydactylysm

BODY SYMMETRY

The symmetry of the human body is very striking. That the left side should be the mirror image of the right, growing together in synchrony from infancy to adulthood, is profoundly mysterious, as there is no physical connection between them. The muscles, ligaments, bones and nerves of the left hand are thus quite independent of the right, but the experience of a man troubled by bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome suggests there is a “sympathy” between them. Soon after the CTS in his left hand was treated, the symptoms in his right hand promptly improved. Another case history exemplifies the strange phenomenon: “When I consulted my family doctor about the severe eczema on my legs, he wrapped one in an ichthopaste bandage and told me to come back in a fortnight,” said my correspondent. “But what about the other leg?” I asked. “That will go right with the other,” he confidently asserted... as indeed it did.”

This sympathy between the two sides is also evidenced in the symmetrical involvement of the joints of both hands in arthritic conditions, and the way traumatic injuries may cause pain and limitation of movement in the uninjured limb. And while an attack of shingles is characteristically unilateral, biopsies of the skin on the opposing side show similar, though milder, forms of nerve damage. This would suggest that the two sides must be linked by some hidden “force” or lines of communication unknown to medical science. Acupuncturists, of course, have claimed this for millennia.

The symmetry extends to the acquisition of skills. Family doctor Francis Rutter, when young, learnt to play the cornet where the fingering is done with the right hand, before later taking up the French horn, which is fingered with the

left. To his surprise, he found that little further learning was necessary – his left hand seemed to know instinctively what his right hand was used to doing. *‘The Surgery’ by James Le Fanu, D.Telegraph, 7+21 Jan 2019.*

MAXIMUM FINGERS MAN

Devendra Suthar’s 28 fingers and toes earn him a world record for polydactylysm. The 46-year-old carpenter, who is married with two children, is known as “maximum fingers

man” in his hometown of Himmatnagar in Gujarat, northwest India. He says the extra four fingers don’t affect his work, though he has to be particularly careful when cutting. He wears specially made shoes so that his seven toes on each foot are comfortable. The most extreme case of polydactyly affected Akshat Saxena, born with seven fingers on each hand and 10 toes per foot, confirmed by doctors in India in March 2010. The extra digits were removed, so Mr Suthar holds



ABOVE: ‘Maximum Fingers Man’: Davendra Suthar shows off his record-breaking digits. His 28 fingers and toes have earned him a place in Guinness Word Records.

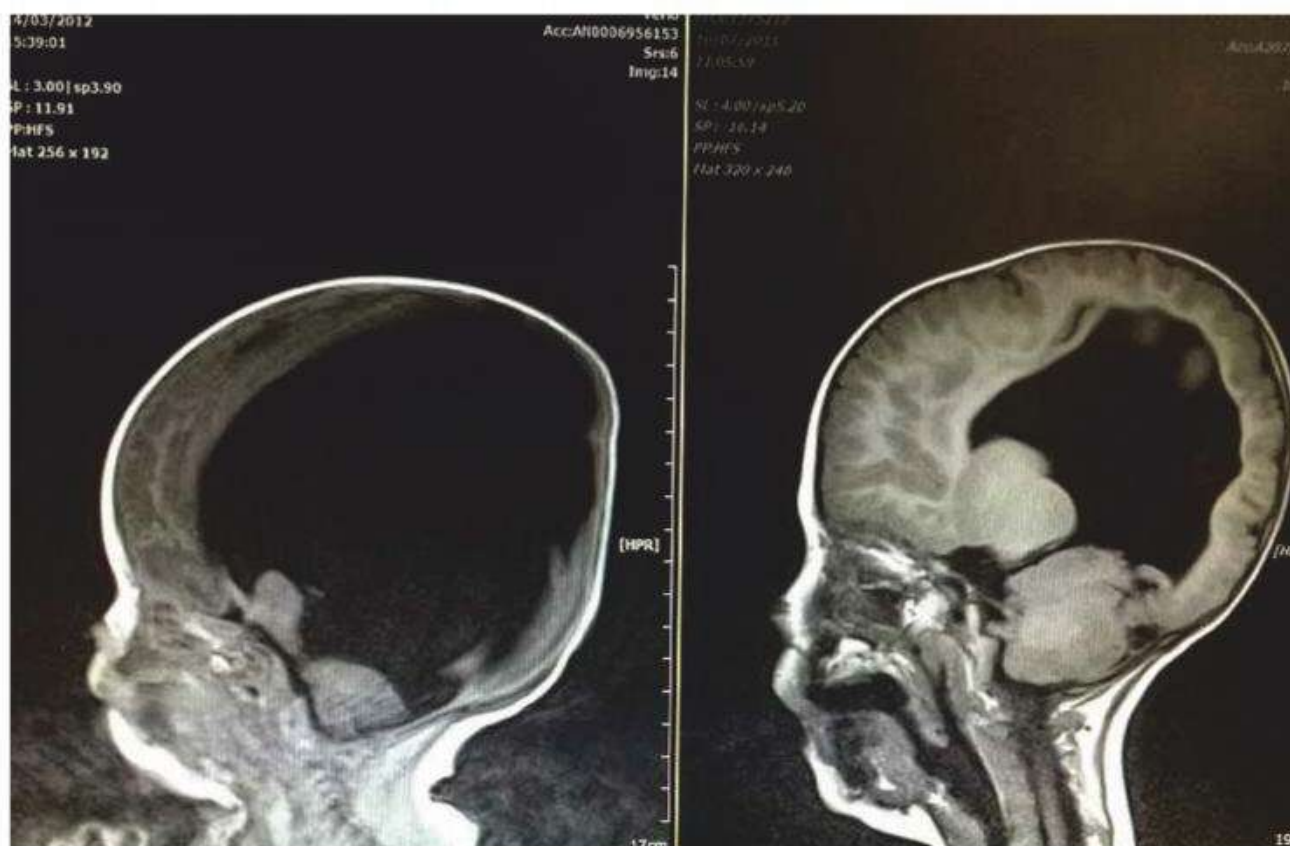
the record for “living with” the most digits. Polydactyly affects around one in every 700 to 1,000 births worldwide. Those in developed countries usually have the extra digits surgically removed by the time they turn two. *guinnessworldrecords.com; dailymail.co.uk, 3 May; D.Telegraph, 4 May 2019.*

COMA LASTING 27 YEARS

In 1991 Munira Abdulla, 32, was involved in a road accident in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). She was cradling her four-year-old son Omar Webair moments before a school bus ploughed into their vehicle in the city of Al Ain. Along with Ms Abdulla’s brother-in-law, who was driving, Omar suffered only minor wounds, but Ms Abdulla sustained a severe brain injury. Transferred to London, she was declared to be in a minimally conscious state, able to feel pain but unable to gesture or speak. She was returned to the UAE, where for years she was fed through a tube and given physiotherapy to ensure her muscles did not deteriorate.

In 2017 the crown prince of Abu Dhabi funded specialist treatment for her in Bavaria. There, doctors prioritised physical therapies and gave her drugs to improve her wakefulness and sleeping patterns. In June 2018, her son, by now 32, was involved in an argument in her hospital room, which seemed to prompt his mother to stir. “There was a misunderstanding and she sensed I was at risk, which caused her a shock,” said Omar. “She was making strange sounds and I kept calling the doctors to examine her. They said everything was normal. Then, three days later, I woke up to the sound of someone calling my name. It was her! She was calling my name, I was flying with joy; for years I have dreamt of this moment.”

His 59-year-old mother had awoken after 27 years. She is



PHOTOS: CATERS NEWS

ABOVE LEFT: Noah Wall, whose brain failed to develop, was not expected to live. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The scan on the left was made when Noah was born, showing only two per cent brain function; the scan on the right, made when he was three, shows that his brain mass had grown to almost 80 per cent capacity.

now back in Abu Dhabi with her family. She is wheelchair-bound, but is able to hold a conversation, recite verses from the Koran and tell people when she is in pain. People who do regain consciousness after several years often have severe disabilities caused by brain damage. An extreme case of this kind was that of Terry Wallis, an American who entered a near-vegetative state after his truck careered off a bridge in 1984, when he was 19. He regained awareness after 19 years. It was thought he had been able to regrow brain tissue. Ms Abdulla's recovery appears to be even more striking because her brain had wasted away over the years. *Independent (online)*, 22 April; *BBC News*, 23 April; *Times*, *D.Telegraph*, 24 April 2019.

THE LYNX EFFECT

Kacper Krauze, 13, got into trouble while paddling with friends in the River Eden in Cumbria on 26 February. Unable to swim, he was submerged in the freezing water for 25 minutes before medics dragged him out and restarted his heart, but he remained in a coma and was taken to hospital. His mother Wioletta, 43, of Appleby, Cumbria, and her taxi driver husband Marek, spent hours talking to him and playing

music at Newcastle's Freeman Hospital. "A nurse suggested I bring in some of his toiletries to wash him with," said his mother. "As soon as I sprayed the Lynx he opened his eyes immediately. He must have remembered his favourite smell." It was 7 March. Kacper had been in a coma for nine days. At the time of the news report, he still struggled with his speech and using his right hand, but had otherwise made a full recovery. *Metro*, *Sun*, 28 May 2019.

GROWING A BRAIN

When Noah Wall from Abbeytown in Cumbria was born in 2012 with just two per cent of his brain, he was not expected to survive. His brain had failed to grow after he developed spina bifida, and hydrocephalus in the womb – and had rare chromosome abnormalities – but scans taken when he was three showed, astonishingly, the brain had grown to 80 per cent capacity. Now, after just weeks of brain training therapy in Australia, the six-year-old, who was told he would need a wheelchair for life, has begun to sit unaided and move his legs. NeuroPhysics Therapy involves encouraging the right and left sides of the brain to communicate in new ways to 'open up' the nervous system. Fired up neurons then

bypass the damaged spinal cord to get messages to limbs. Noah can now write and hold a conversation. His parents hope that he will soon take his first steps. *D.Mail*, *Newsweek* 21 Feb 2019.

BLOODY MIRACLE

Frankie Morrison was born with just 35ml (two tablespoonsful) of blood in her body, seven times less than average. Her mother Maria, 32, from Hull, had been rushed into hospital for an emergency C-section after the baby stopped moving, having passed too much blood back through the umbilical cord just before birth. Her lungs were full of water and she was not expected to survive, but she soon rallied and was taken home after three weeks. A year later, she had only a slightly weakened immune system. *Sun*, 17 Oct 2016.

SEMI-IDENTICAL TWINS

Doctors have documented the world's second known case of "semi-identical" twins – neither identical nor fraternal, but somewhere in between. The first case was in the US in 2007, reported in *The Journal of Human Genetics*. The phenomenon is extremely rare; such embryos seldom survive. Prof Nicholas Fisk, who led the team that cared for the

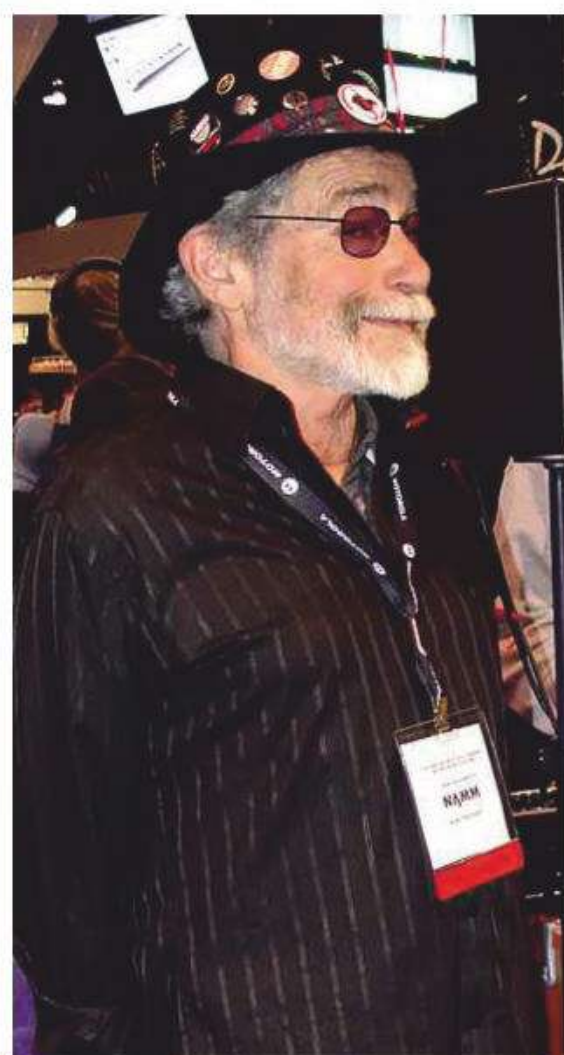
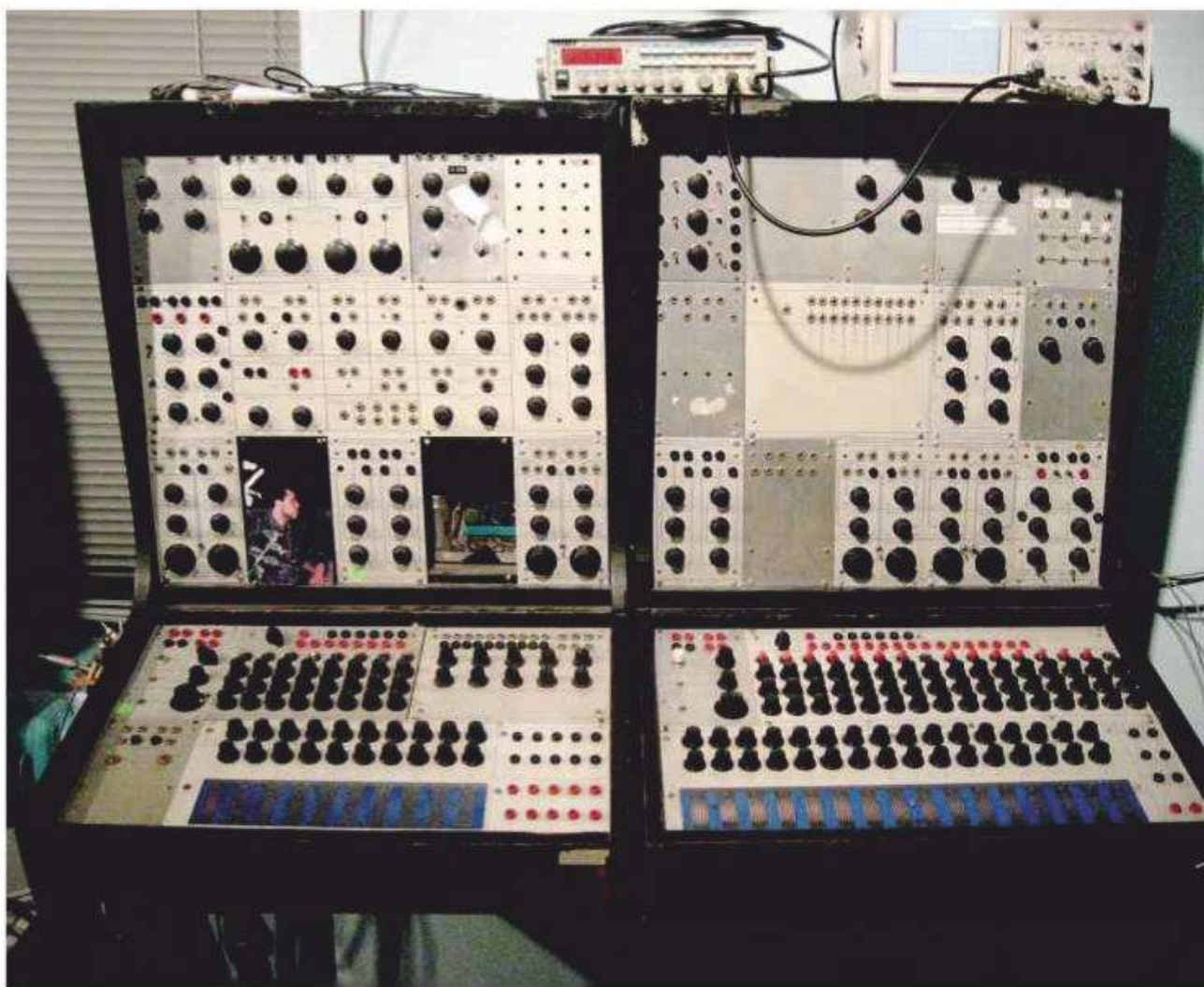
mother and twins at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital, Australia, in 2014, said the discovery was made through a routine pregnancy scan.

The first-time mother was 28 at the time and had conceived naturally. The case was written up in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. "The mother's ultrasound at six weeks showed a single placenta and positioning of amniotic sacs that indicated she was expecting identical twins," said Prof Fisk. "However, an ultrasound at 14 weeks showed the twins were male and female, which is not possible for identical twins... Broadly, they are about three fourths identical. It's almost as rare as hens' teeth."

In the case of semi-identical, or sesquizygotic, twins, the egg is thought to have been fertilised simultaneously by two sperm before it divided. If one egg is fertilised by two sperm, it results in three sets of chromosomes, rather than the standard two – one from the mother and two from the father. And, according to researchers, three sets of chromosomes are "typically incompatible with life and embryos do not usually survive". The identity of the twins has not been revealed. *BBC News*, 27 Feb; *Guardian*, 28 Feb 2019.



SOUNDS AND VISIONS | Techie gets dosed by a 50-year-old synth, plus the people who hear voices and other auditory hallucinations



ABOVE LEFT: A Buchla 100 series, or Buchla Box, as built by Don Buchla of Berkeley from the early 1960s to the early 1970s. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Buchla at a music trade show in 2006. **BELOW:** Owsley Stanley, aka “Bear” (left) talks with Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh at Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, 23 March 1975.

A TRIP THROUGH TIME

At the helm of KPIX Television, Broadcast Operations Manager Eliot Curtis tackles all sorts of technical problems to keep Channel 5 on the air. Late last year, he volunteered to fix a vintage “analog music modular instrument” owned by the music department at Cal State University East Bay. The instrument – commonly known today as a synthesizer – was commissioned by Professors Glenn Glasow and Robert Basart, leading avant-garde musicians who taught in the music department in the 1960s, when Cal State East Bay was known as Cal State Hayward. The device eventually fell out of favour and was stored for decades in a cool, dark cupboard in the corner of a classroom.

At some point, it was augmented with additional modules, including a red-coloured module on the top row. During his repair work, Curtis

opened the module and saw something stuck under a knob. “There was like a residue... a crust or a crystalline residue on it,” he said. He sprayed a cleaning solvent on it and started to push the dissolving crystal with his finger as he attempted to dislodge it and clean the area. About 45 minutes later, he began to feel a weird, tingling sensation. It was the initial phase of an acid trip, which lasted roughly nine hours. Three separate chemical tests identified the substance as LSD (or Delysid, the original Sandoz trade name, which for some reason didn’t catch on, unlike Bayer’s ‘Heroin’). The drug can remain potent for decades if kept in a cool, dark place and can be ingested through the skin. No one knows whether the acid was intentionally stashed inside the red module or an accidental spill resulted in the drug seeping through to the circuitry.

It transpired the instrument

It was the initial phase of an acid trip which lasted about nine hours

was a Buchla 100 series modular synthesizer, created by the late Don Buchla of Berkeley, “the Leonardo Da Vinci of electronic music design,” according to electronic music pioneer Suzanne Ciani, the “Diva of the Diode”. In 1966, some Buchla modules ended up on the Merry





Prankster bus purchased by Ken Kesey. During the last of Kesey's acid tests at Winterland on Hallowe'en in 1966, electronic sounds, possibly from the Buchla, appeared to interrupt an interview of Kesey. Buchla was friends with Owsley Stanley ('Bear'), the genius behind the Grateful Dead's sound system, famous for making the purest acid ever to hit the street.

After his strange trip, Curtis – wearing gloves – finished repairing the vintage Buchla. The instrument is now back at Cal State East Bay and ready for music students to explore. The device has no keyboard and is played by turning knobs and patching cords. [CBS] 21 May 2019.

HEAR HEAR

A 69-year-old woman who has endured musical hallucinations for over a decade participated in an academic study into the little-understood condition. It began after Sylvia, a maths teacher and keen amateur keyboard player, developed severe tinnitus and loss of hearing. At first she heard a simple repetition of two notes as if played on a piano. This increased in complexity to become fragmentary tunes, "always in a minor key and therefore a bit depressing". She was able to transcribe the melodies using musical notation. The condition progressed and Sylvia began to recognise phrases from Gilbert & Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* and music by Bach. She then noticed that she could alter the pattern of these aural hallucinations by playing music herself. The 2014 study used magnetoencephalography (MEG) to examine brain activity and found that areas of the brain normally involved in the processing of melodies and retrieval of musical memories were particularly active when the hallucinations were heard. Sylvia has no history of verbal hallucinations, nor any neurological or psychiatric disorder.

A more frequently recorded condition of auditory hallucination is that of hearing

voices, typically thought of as an indication of schizophrenia. Studies have found that as many as one in 20 people regularly hear voices, many of whom have never been diagnosed with any psychiatric disorder and do not require any treatment.

Peter Bullimore, 52, a trustee of the Hearing Voices Network (the coordinating body for over 180 support groups worldwide) has been hearing voices for over 30 years. At first, he recalled, it was a frightening experience; he was prescribed anti-psychotic medication which had no effect. Gradually he came to accept his voices, and says: "I wouldn't want to be without [them] because I think they are guides in their own way".

'Hearing the Voice', a research project conducted by Durham University, aims to better understand the condition. "Many people think that voice hearing is just a symptom of severe mental

illness like schizophrenia or psychosis, but what they don't know is that hearing voices is also an important part of many ordinary people's lives," said project director Professor Charles Fernyhough. Co-director Dr Angela Woods argues that while public perception regards hallucinatory voices only as abusive, threatening, or commanding, some voices "can be kind and encouraging, providing a person with an important source of comfort and support".

Why some people hear voices is still unclear. One theory proposed by the project is that inner speech or dialogue may sometimes be mistakenly attributed to an external source. Most participants described their voices as having an 'alien' quality, as if not emanating from the self. If the statements are derogatory, the person may say, "I would never

think that".

Some famous persons said to have been voice hearers include Socrates, Joan of Arc, Charles Dickens, Sigmund Freud and Mahatma Gandhi, suggesting a potential link with creativity and original thought. Dr Julian Jaynes's controversial *Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) argued that as recently as 3,000 years ago, the human brain was split, so that the experiences and memories of the right hemisphere were transmitted to the left hemisphere and experienced as auditory hallucinations. *Metro*, 12 Nov 2013; (Dundee) *Courier and Advertiser*, 27 Jan 2014; S Kumar, W Sedley, GR Barnes, S Teki, KJ Firston, TD Griffiths (2014): 'A brain basis for musical hallucinations' *Cortex* vol.52, pp86-97: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2013.12.002> **Christopher Josiffe**



ABOVE: Joan of Arc is one of numerous historical figures said to have heard voices, represented as floating figures of Saints Michael, Margaret, and Catherine in this 1879 painting by Jules Bastien-Lepage.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

NECROLOG

This month, we remember the psychic investigator whose name will forever be associated with the media frenzy surrounding the 'Highgate Vampire'



DAVID FARRANT

Occultist, author and psychic investigator David Farrant held a unique place in English legal history as the first person to be arrested and jailed for offences arising from his activities as a vampire hunter, although he insisted the term 'vampire' was a misnomer and misrepresented his beliefs. Convicted at the Old Bailey in 1974 on a range of charges, he received a heavy sentence – though doubts remain about the safety of at least some of these convictions.

Born at Shepherd's Hill, Highgate, north London, the son of a businessman and radio manufacturer, his early esoteric ideas were influenced by his Spiritualist mother who died when he was 13. Away at boarding school, he was deeply affected by her death, becoming increasingly rebellious and engaging in escalating acts of defiance resulting in his expulsion. Quitting formal education, he travelled to France, working his way to Spain as a seasonal and casual labourer. By the time he returned to Britain in the mid-1960s, his esoteric interest crystallised in a commitment to the Wiccan movement, an attraction that he admitted was partly encouraged by the rebellious and transgressive aspects of Wicca. He became widely known around Highgate

as 'Birdman' for his appearances with a parrot on his shoulder and for playing various practical jokes demonstrating a creative and anarchic sense of humour.

An early association in 1967 with record producer Joe Meek, who sought initiation into Wicca, was cut short when Meek committed

suicide after shooting his landlady.

Later the same year, Farrant founded the British Occult Society (later the British Psychic and Occult Society (BPOS)). As with all too many groups pursuing shared esoteric interests, it was later bedevilled by internal disputes and controversies that rumbled on for many years (what *FT* has dubbed 'the 40 Year War') concerning alleged occult phenomena centring upon Highgate Cemetery in North London.

A personal experience that ultimately determined much of the later course of Farrant's life and career occurred at the north gate of the cemetery on 21 December 1969. Peering through the cemetery gates, he spotted a tall dark figure around 7ft (2m) tall with red eyes, which vanished upon his reciting a Kabbalistic invocation. After he wrote a brief letter to the *Hampstead and Highgate Express* (6 Feb 1970) describing his experience, the paper received a flood of letters apparently from readers claiming weird experiences in the cemetery, prompting the paper to ask if a 'Wampyr' or 'vampire' walked at Highgate. Increasingly sensational stories followed in the press and on television in which Farrant featured prominently, leading the

crumbling cemetery to become a magnet for thrill-seekers, occult dabblers and cross-and-fang fanatics of all varieties. With them came a wave of desecration and vandalism to graves that the authorities proved unable to prevent.

Farrant's high public profile undoubtedly contributed to his arrest on the legally vague charge of being in an enclosed area for an unlawful purpose armed with what was presented as a stake. The first hearing before a magistrate (whose name appropriately enough was Christopher Lea) was adjourned when the Detective Sergeant leading the prosecution suffered a mild heart attack. Three weeks later, the case came before stipendiary magistrate DJ Purcell who, after advising Farrant to see a doctor, acquitted him, finding the cemetery was not an enclosed area in law, and accepting submissions that hunting for vampires was no more an illegal or irrational than spending vast sums of money seeking the Loch Ness Monster. The case attracted international coverage, with the *Baltimore Sun* observing it was "no longer a crime to hunt vampires in England".

Buoyed up by this acquittal, Farrant immediately announced he and the BPOS would resume nightly vigils at the cemetery, hoping to catch black magicians trying to resurrect a corpse as "a zombie" (*Hornsey Journal*, 7 Oct 1970). However, he was less fortunate two years later when he and another society member, Victoria Jervis, were arrested in the course of a ghost hunt and ritual at Monken Hadley churchyard, Barnet. Convicted of "riotous, violent, or indecent behaviour" under section 2 of the Ecclesiastical Courts Jurisdiction Act 1860, he was described by the prosecution as a young man who "had read too

much Dennis Wheatley" and fined 10 pounds. (*Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 24 Nov 1972). Nonetheless, these well-publicised investigations and stunts continued, leading to an invitation from Oxford University to address the Student's Union.

In January 1974 the police raided Farrant's home following an incident where a man who had parked his car outside the cemetery returned and found a headless skeleton sitting in the driver's seat. Nothing linked Farrant to this incident. Unfortunately, he had also provoked the police by serving two officers – Westham and Reid – with voodoo dolls recklessly sent by recorded delivery. The police seized photographs taken in 1971 of him together with a young woman in various stages of undress inside vaults with opened coffins at Highgate Cemetery (some of these had previously appeared in newspapers). Remanded in custody on a collection of charges including damaging graves, witness intimidation, possession of a firearm and ammunition without a certificate and stealing a pillowcase and bedding from Barnet hospital, he was committed to the Old Bailey for trial. At the 1996 *Fortean Times* 'Unconvention', Farrant plausibly maintained he was the victim of a miscarriage of justice in relation to some of these charges.

Convicted on 17 July 1974, he was sentenced by Mr Justice Argyle QC to four years and eight months imprisonment.

The indictment certainly appears to have been overloaded, as noted by the Court of Appeal (Lord Justice James, Mr Justice Milmo and Mr Justice Cusack) referring to "technical offences" included by a prosecution intent on securing his conviction at all costs. However, despite the lack of direct evidence on the offences of damaging graves, the Court declined to



quash the conviction.

The media continued its interest, reporting that an imprisoned Farrant prayed naked to the stars, and that this “terrified” his axe-murderer cellmate, who begged for solitary confinement. Farrant made an unsuccessful application to the European Court of Human Rights to have Wiccan beliefs formally recognised as a religion (ultimately failing in 1977) and in 1976 commenced a hunger strike, leading to his release after six weeks.

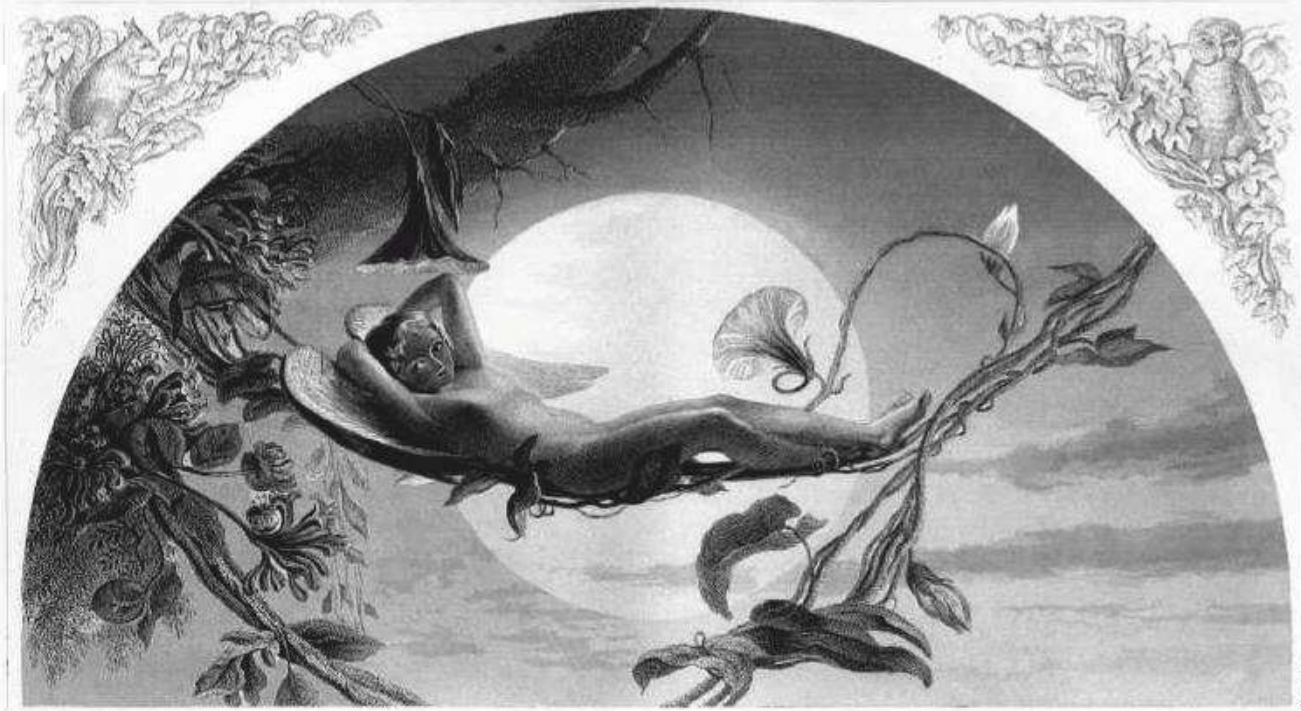
After staying with a friend, he moved into a flat on Muswell Hill Road where he remained for the rest of his life. He found work as the manager of the Stormont Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, adjacent to Highgate Wood, and resumed his research work, lecturing and broadcasting extensively. In 1983 he investigated a concentration of hauntings on the Suffolk-Essex border, ascribing them to battles in the mediæval period, and in 1987 investigated a supposedly haunted painting.

In 1991 he published a pamphlet, *Beyond the Highgate Vampire*. Later, he issued an autobiography in two volumes, *In the Shadow of the Highgate Vampire*, and *Out of the Shadows*, as well as *Dark Journey*, a collection of accounts of other cases he investigated.

David Farrant married Mary Olden at St Stephens Catholic church on Highgate Hill in September 1967. Their son Jamie was born two months later. In 1975 he was briefly released from prison to attend a divorce court. In 1979 he married Australian artist Colette Sully, which quickly foundered, though they remained friends thereafter. His secretary, Della Vellacris, became the third Mrs Farrant in 2010. Farrant is survived by his son Jamie, his granddaughter Lauryn, and three wives.

David Robert Donovan Farrant, psychic investigator, born Highgate, north London, 23 Jan 1946; died Tottenham, north London, 8 April 2019, aged 73.

Alan Murdie and Gareth J Medway



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

OLD BELIEFS IN A NEW WORLD

There is a long-standing idea that European fairies did not make it to the Americas.

The immigrants crossing the Atlantic may have had, at home, their *duendes*, their *fate*, their pixies and their trolls, but ‘the other crowd’ never got through Ellis Island. North American folklorists tend to go along with the fairy-free claim, and articles on American fairies concentrate on Amerindian fairy traditions.

I, too, used to take the absence of European fairies in the 13 colonies and their successors as a simple fact. However, I kept a file for those rare instances when European fairies turned up and – in the way of things – the file grew. I then pooled resources with fortean historian Chris Woodyard (who had an even larger file) and we put together a hand-list of European-style fairies recorded in North America prior to World War II. Our only rule: we ignored Newfoundland, where fairy traditions had been amply documented by the brilliant Barbara Rieti.

The list took a couple of years to write but it will soon be published and hopefully, at that point, added to by forteans and folklorists alike. There are just over 150 entries: if you have any obscure references to share there may still be time to slip them into the first edition. The most impressive thing

about the list, at least to me, is its variety. We have an Irish mother in New York burning her baby because she believed that he was a fairy: the changeling tradition brought from the west of Ireland to the ‘fresh green breast of the New World’. There are the supernatural dancers circling around a tree, seen by the celebrated journalist William Allen White

in Kansas: were they on their way to Oz? There were the fairies who ‘pixilated’ travellers and sailors on the coast of Massachusetts. There was the girl in San Francisco who saw two gnomes at her bedroom window. There were the imps that lived in a cave in Oklahoma. There was a fairy well in New Jersey. There were knockers in a mine in Utah (and several other western states). Then there were the banshees howling or playing dirges on ghostly instruments.

Having read and reread this catalogue, my impression

is that it is not that there weren’t European fairies in the western hemisphere. There demonstrably were. It is that European fairy beliefs went undocumented. Folklore collectors in Canada and the United States, for the most part, ignored anything to do with the fey. Even in Newfoundland where fairy traditions were an important part of life, they were barely recorded before the 1960s. Most of our reports come from incidental mentions in newspapers.

Simon Young’s new book *Magical Folk: British and Irish Fairies* is out now from Gibson Square.

THERE WAS
THE GIRL IN
SAN FRANCISCO
WHO SAW TWO
GNOMES AT
HER BEDROOM
WINDOW



Beware the unintended consequences

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufological research

STORM AREA 51!

I imagine it is more comfortable to wear bloomers than to be caught making a bloomer, but this is ufology after all, where you can get away with almost anything. (For collectors of useless information, the ladies' undergarment is so-called not because of its shape, but after Mrs Amelia J Bloomer (1818-94), "an American social reformer who advocated a similar garment" according to my Oxford dictionary.) Stars and spear-carriers of ufology have been doing quite well on the bloomer front lately.

First and most spectacular has been the suggestion that on 20 September a whole bunch of people "storm" Area 51 and, one presumes, drag the aliens hidden there into the daylight. This was posted on Facebook by one Matty Roberts – who meant it as a joke. As might have been clear from this: "We will all meet up at the Area 51 Alien Center tourist attraction and coordinate our entry. If we naruto run, we can move faster than their bullets. Let's see them aliens." In case you didn't know, a 'naruto run' is an eccentric form of locomotion named after a Japanese anime character. And he'd better be a lot quicker than Usain Bolt, given that a round from an M4/M16 rifle leaves the barrel at around 3,000ft per second. That could put a sting in your tail.

All of this just-a-bit-obvious satire appears to have gone over the heads of a sizeable chunk of the ufologically-oriented population: some two million people had signed up to join in the storming at the time of writing. Rather bizarrely (but then I have lived a sheltered life), the lewd website Pornhub reported that since this wheeze went viral, searches on their site for matters related to sex with aliens had increased by an astounding 60,000 per cent. Some people really should be careful what they wish for, shouldn't they? Granted, it's hard to know how many of those 1.3 million would-be stormtroopers have signed up jus' fer the craic and how many seriously think they can make a difference to Area 51's hefty defences without having an uncomfortable difference made to themselves. The 'camo dudes' are, let's not forget, authorised to use deadly force. The US Air Force, no doubt in hope of avoiding anything so embarrassing as bloodshed or even a broken nose, solemnly intoned that it was "ready to protect America and its assets" and reminded us all that Area 51 is an "open training range for the US Air Force, and we would discourage anyone from trying to come into the area where we train American



TOP: Tucker Carlson shows a YouTube videoclip of a UFO hovering over Area 51; it's a water tower. ABOVE LEFT: One use of the "curious image" spotted by Mick West on the TTSAAS website. ABOVE RIGHT: What West says is the original image from which the "curious image" is derived – a photograph showing a rocket being launched from a Norwegian island in 1952.

armed forces" – an exemplary deployment of military euphemism and understatement. Personally, I can't wait to see how many nutters turn up, but do suggest they watch their assets.

BREAKING THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Speaking of Area 51, the irrepressible Nick Pope has of late not so much ignored the law of unintended consequences, as broken the Eleventh Commandment. Back in June, Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson showed the world a clip of a 'UFO' hovering, or maybe rising, over the secret base. The video in question was originally posted on the YouTube channel 'Adventures with Christian' and was subsequently reproduced in British tabloids such as the *Sun* and *Daily Express*. Nick Pope said he had no idea what it was, but it was "fascinating" and he would be analysing it "over the next few weeks". Why should it take him so long? It's a goddam' water tower, visible as such on any number of shots of the base. Silly boy.

The even less repressible Tom DeLonge

has gone one better than that in trampling the Eleventh Commandment. Mick West (metabunk.org) noticed a "curious image" on the TTSAAS website, "looking like a beam of light shooting up into space. People wonder if this is meant to represent beamed energy propulsion."

West, blessed be he, discovered it's possible to resize the picture, revealing a rather weird structure at the top. Flip that upside down, though, and it turns out to be a mountainous island. A Norwegian one, in fact, and the picture shows a rocket being fired to gather data on the aurora borealis, in 1952.—

As West says: "What seems like a widening beam of light shooting up, is actually a long exposure of a rocket, going in the opposite direction (in the image). Removing context allows all kinds of speculation," he ends drily.

Oh, and in case any of you were wondering, the Eleventh Commandment – long expunged from Biblical texts by killjoy scholars – reads: "Thou shalt not get caught."



The Summer of Sixty-Nine

JENNY RANGLES looks back on her long involvement with the Jodrell Bank radio telescope

This has been a momentous summer for space-related matters – highlighted in July by the 50th anniversary of the Apollo missions that first landed humans on the Moon. That summer of 69 changed the world – inspiring exploration and cementing the fact that we are all on a tiny orb in the vastness of space. The modern passion for ecology began with a single photo taken by the command module pilot as the two men in the lunar lander docked with him and the globe of Earth formed a backdrop. That shot contained every human then alive apart from the photographer, Mike Collins.

Amidst the media blitz for the anniversary of these events, World Heritage status was fittingly granted to Jodrell Bank – the radio telescope near Goostrey in Cheshire aptly now put alongside Stonehenge and the Pyramids. Jodrell has been involved in the space programme for over 60 years and is dear to me from both an astronomical and UFO perspective.

In that summer of 69 I was starting my studies for physics A level. I had my own telescope and been to Jodrell watching the structure rise from the fields. I had also just joined BUFORA. As yet my involvement in UFOs was limited to pondering what might or might not be true, but that changed dramatically after I passed my A levels, was accepted to study astrophysics at Edinburgh just as my life was unravelling in other ways that would impact my immediate destiny.

Part of those forces (boyfriend related) involved me going instead to Manchester University where my astronomy course led me to Jodrell, as the facility was operated by the Uni. I learned from lecturers such as Professor Zdenek Kopal, who was pioneering the quest for planets around other stars thanks to radio telescopes like Jodrell.

We already knew the Moon was sterile. Indeed the University got some of the earliest rocks brought back by the Apollo flights to study because of Jodrell's help to NASA proving this true. So it was an exciting period for me – though medical issues meant my scientific life would not go much further and instead I ended up investigating aliens in a very different way. However, as it turned out, my association with Jodrell Bank was far from over. During the next 30 years I would be back there a lot.

By 1980, my medical issues resolved, and my first book co-written with Peter Warrington, partly during long weeks in hospital in London, I was now coordinating investigations with BUFORA and writing for the US group created by Dr J Allen Hynek. Thanks



to Allen's support as a renowned astronomer at Northwestern University in Illinois helping train NASA astronauts – some of whom I met there – plus my time at Manchester Uni, I by chance became a UFO consultant for Jodrell. It was totally unofficial, as they reminded me more than once. They understandably preferred not to be perceived as having an open interest in the subject.

Still, as a result of this link in 1986 I recorded interviews for a documentary I wrote for the BBC there. I spoke to them most weeks for many years up to 2003 when I filmed one of my final media appearances at Jodrell for a BBC1 programme alongside Gail Porter and her lovely baby daughter. In the 1980s I also raised money for charity in the complex with local UFO group MUFORA as part of an ITV Telethon (pictured above). At Jodrell we sold UFO memorabilia and Peter Hough and I gave lectures in the planetarium. Special dispensation was required but our record had paved the way. I did get an odd question from an ITV reporter, not seemingly *au fait* with local knowledge, who looked genuinely bemused by my grin when she asked me: "Why would anyone report a UFO sighting to a bank?" Yet Jodrell Bank did pass on dozens of cases to me reported to them by equally puzzled citizens who assumed they (not Barclays) were the place to go.

Most observers of something odd would not realise that radio telescopes do not view things optically; they just knew it had a 'telescope', and so assumed they must have watched the 'alien craft' as they had done. Of course, virtually every case that came my way was not remotely to do with aliens. They were often aircraft heading into Manchester Airport, or satellites and other IFOs.

One that made me smile in a good way involved a man who had seen something rushing across the skies of Staffordshire one night. I recognised that it was probably just a meteor burning up in the atmosphere and Jodrell concurred. But the witness, content with the explanation, still had a

request. Aware of the fact that amateurs did sometimes discover things in the sky, such as comets, he asked if I could arrange for Jodrell to name this meteor after his wife. I did not have the heart to say no, even though meteors are too common to have names. Why spoil the romance of this lovely idea?

Sometimes the involvement of Jodrell scientists was a little more direct and required me to be circumspect in what I said afterward to protect this unofficial cooperation between science and ufology. For example, in one case from Lancashire where police officers were called out to reports of strange dancing lights that the officers then saw themselves, we at MUFORA quickly suspected the cause and I talked to Jodrell. It seemed localised, as they had no other reports elsewhere but agreed our theory was possible. So Jodrell suggested they get results from equipment they were operating that revealed crucial data about the atmosphere at the time of the sighting. The results confirmed that the atmosphere had been conducive to a temperature inversion layer that would create a mirage with stars. Not unlike seeing a pool of water on the road ahead when you drive on a hot dry day – the pool really being part of the sky 'relocated' via this mirage – so too can bright stars or planets close to the horizon be the source of a baffling UFO mirage... as happened here.

One of the last cases I worked on with my contacts at Jodrell before I had to give up to be a full time carer happened on 2 July 2000 – World UFO Day. A man from Wythenshawe, Manchester, had called Jodrell to report being hit on the head by a tiny UFO whilst in the garden. It set his baseball cap on fire! Considering this might have been a falling meteorite, I talked to an astronomer at Jodrell, who after consulting their meteor specialist offered good reason to find this unlikely – so we brought in scientists from Manchester University and UMIST to assess the evidence and I agreed to report back to Jodrell. Sadly, the recovered rock was not local nor from space but very terrestrial. It also had gum on the back, suggesting it was a sample that was once stuck on a display card. It showed no evidence of having been heated, fallen from the sky and so caused the fire. The witness agreed he just found it in his garden afterward and presumed it was what hit him. There was local thunderstorm activity at the time that might be relevant. His TV set had suffered a power surge and needing repairing, so that might suggest ball lightning was the real culprit. But both Jodrell and I could only leave this one unresolved.

COURTESY JENNY RANGLES

THE DEVIL'S BUSINESS

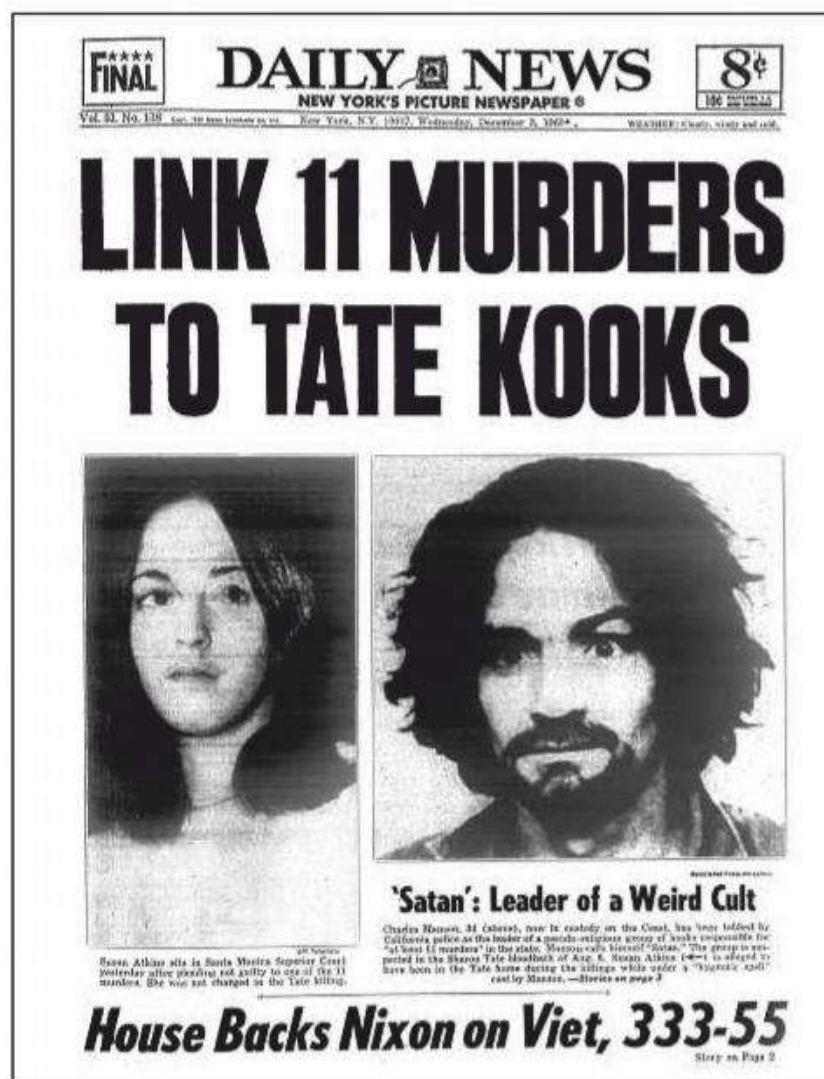
THE MANSON MURDERS, THE END OF THE SIXTIES, AND THE 'CULT OF THE OCCULT'

Fifty years ago, Roman Polanski was enjoying the success of his Satanic horror film *Rosemary's Baby* when his wife, actress Sharon Tate, was brutally killed by Charles Manson's 'Family'. **JAMES RILEY** examines the occult background of the Manson murders.

On 17 August 1969, film-director Roman Polanski arrived at 10050 Cielo Drive, the palatial LA home he had shared with his wife, the actress Sharon Tate. Emotionally and psychologically, Polanski was in an extremely fragile state of mind. Just over a week earlier, on 9 August, Tate and three of her friends – the celebrity hairdresser Jay Sebring, coffee heiress Abigail Folger and actor Wojciech Frykowski – had been brutally murdered in the house. Steven Parent, a young man visiting Cielo Drive's on-site caretaker William Garretson, was also killed. He had been shot on the driveway. Garretson alone remained unharmed, reportedly because he spent the evening in the cottage that came with his job and was thus hidden safely away from the main house.

It would be November before the murders and those of Rosemary and Leno LaBianca – killed on 10 August in nearby Los Feliz – would be connected to 'the Family', a commune-cum-cult held together by the conman, pimp, and sometime musician Charles Manson. His trial and that of 'Family' members Susan Atkins, Charles 'Tex' Watson, Patricia Krenwinkel and Leslie Van Houten would extend into 1971 and lead to prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi's true crime bestseller *Helter Skelter* (1974), named after the bloody writing found on the walls of the LaBianca residence. Meanwhile, in the immediate aftermath of the murders, it was Polanski who occupied the spotlight.¹

Reporters turned up *en masse* to Tate's funeral in Culver City on 13 August and Polanski found himself swept up in a rumour-mill of speculation and scandal. The media were presenting him as everything from grieving husband to intended target, or even perpetrator, of the murders. It was as a response to this attention that Polanski decided to return to Cielo drive on the 17th to "set the record straight". With him



LEFT: A front page from 3 December 1969 linking Charles Manson to the Tate/LaBianca killings and other murders. FACING PAGE: Manson is brought into the Los Angeles city jail.

the Boston Strangler case of 1964. Hurkos had been a friend of Jay Sebring, and Sebring's family had asked him to perform a 'reading' at Cielo Drive to glean information about the crime.

Hardly anything had been changed since the evening of the ninth and for Polanski 10050 Cielo Drive had become a haunted house, utterly uncanny, truly *unhomely*: a disturbing mix of the familiar and the unfamiliar. It was all there, just as he remembered it, but there were other, horrible things too: the vivid marks of murder. Worst of all, there was an overwhelming sense of absence. Tate was not there, nor were her and Polanski's friends, nor was the child they had been expecting: Tate had been eight and a half months pregnant when she died. Weeping in the bedroom,

Polanski suddenly realised this attempt at catharsis was too much, far too soon. Hurkos too, claimed to have been physically affected by the heavy atmosphere. After completing his reading, he put it to the press that Tate and her party had been killed by three men turned into "frenzied homicidal maniacs by massive doses of LSD". It wasn't just drugs, though. According to Hurkos, the killings "erupted during a black magic ritual known as *goona-goona*".²

Hurkos's response to Cielo Drive was speculative, inaccurate, but not inapt when seen in the light of the details that would later emerge during the Manson trial. It was also in keeping with the wider climate of 1969. Regular *FT* readers will be familiar with the work of Gary Lachman whose book *Turn off Your Mind* (2001) looked at the resurgence of magical ideas, "all things

Polanski found himself caught up in speculation and scandal

were a writer-photographer team from *Life* magazine, Tommy Thompson and Julian Wasser, as well as the television psychic Peter Hurkos. Hurkos was a Dutch psychic and medium who had gained a certain degree of fame as a 'psychic detective' of sorts. He had previously used his purported ESP abilities to analyse the files relating to



occultly marvellous” across the decade.³ By 1969 and the start of the 1970s, this thinking had spread out from the counterculture, taken root within the culture at large and had, in certain quarters, veered *very* much towards the dark side. The Tate-LaBianca murders crystallised this mood. When Manson’s wild-eyed, intense face appeared on the cover of *Life* in December 1969 under the banner ‘The Love and Terror Cult’ it came to symbolise an inversion of the values which had been associated with ‘the Sixties’ and its youth-led counterculture: peace, pacifism and harmony. When he entered Cielo Drive, ‘Tex’ Watson is purported to have told a startled Frykowski that he was there to do “the Devil’s business”. For the readers of *Life*, Manson was the Devil-in-chief, the Prince of Darkness who set the diabolical plot into action and loomed ominously over the late Sixties. He appeared to have descended on the world like the portentous enemy of the decade: an evil spirit of the age that embodied all its anxieties and worked for its downfall.⁴

The crimes of the Manson Family were indeed atrocious, but what Hunter S Thompson called the “bad craziness” of the late 1960s and early 1970s was not limited to their assault on Cielo Drive. In conducting “the Devil’s business”, Manson was wilfully leading the Family towards a dark cloud,

a cloud that was already forming as the decade came to an end, and which hovered particularly close to Roman Polanski.

THE ROSEMARY’S BABY CURSE

In 1969 Polanski was best known for the Satanic horror film *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968). He had previously made *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), during the filming of which he had met Sharon Tate. *Vampire Killers* did not lack the bleakness of earlier Polanski features like *Repulsion* (1965), but it was *Rosemary’s Baby* that – in a thoroughly domestic manner – took his vision to apocalyptic levels. Based on Ira Levin’s 1967 novel and featuring Mia Farrow as the young New Yorker Rosemary Woodhouse, the film charts her nightmarish pregnancy in the shadow of an occult conspiracy emanating from the city’s Bramford Building. The film takes place very specifically between 1965 and 1966 with Polanski taking care to bookend the plot with two actual events: the visit of Pope Paul VI to New York on 4 October 1965 and the publication of *Time* magazine’s controversial cover feature ‘Is God Dead?’ on 8 April 1966. Rosemary’s pregnancy and the eventual birth of Satan’s son on Earth thus take place between the first papal visit to America and the widespread circulation of an article detailing the struggle of theologians to keep

religious worship relevant in the modern world. It is as if religious authority weakens as the birth approaches. Unsurprisingly, the film generated criticism from the Christian right and Polanski was also mindful of its pull in the other direction. When he was interviewed by the LAPD in the aftermath of Tate’s death, he suggested that ‘witchcraft’ might well have been a motive in the murder. Polanski thought he could have been the target of a group fixated on the occult themes of the film.

The alleged ‘curse’ of *Rosemary’s Baby* further cemented this link between cinema and Satan. William Castle, the film’s producer and Hollywood’s grand master of lurid and ‘outlandish’ publicity, claimed that soon after the completion of the film, a series of tragedies affected those involved. There was *some* truth in this. In April 1969 composer Krzysztof Komeda succumbed to an aneurysm following a head injury he received in late 1968. At the same time, Castle was hospitalised with kidney failure. Soon after, he heard about Tate’s murder and went on to claim that the entire production of *Rosemary’s Baby* and its aftermath was “controlled by some unexplainable force”. Polanski was more sceptical. Witchcraft (in some form) might have been a motivating factor in the deaths at Cielo Drive, but he did not admit to a belief in it. Either way,



ABOVE: 17 August 1969: The Dutch-born clairvoyant and psychic detective Peter Hurkos studies the bloodstained living room of 10050 Cielo Drive, Beverly Hills, where pregnant actress Sharon Tate and others had been found brutally murdered by Manson Family members a week earlier.



JOE BANGAY / DAILY EXPRESS / HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Mia Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby*. ABOVE RIGHT: Sharon Tate and Roman Polanski arrive at the film's UK premiere on 24 January 1969.

both accounts aligned *Rosemary's Baby* with a deep sense of misfortune. Whether through coincidence or diabolical conspiracy, bad things seemed to happen to those who worked on the film, and its growing legend carried a clear, cautionary message. As Nikolas Schreck put it: "Anyone who dares to make a film about the Devil is asking for trouble".

It was not all William Castle's fault, though. Anton LaVey, High Priest of the Church of Satan, the religious organisation he founded in San Francisco in 1966, merrily allowed the rumour to circulate that, at Polanski's request, he had acted as a consultant to the production. He also claimed that he appeared in *Rosemary's Baby* – as the Devil, no less. In the film's infamous dream/rape sequence, in which Satan impregnates Rosemary, the audience is given only a glimpse of an unearthly, beast-like figure. According to LaVey, he was the one wearing the costume – an assertion that Clay Tanner, the actor who *actually* wore the outfit on set and performed the scene with Mia Farrow, would dispute.⁵

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the weird aura of *Rosemary's Baby* fed into the popularity of the Church of Satan. Here was a horror film that gave the source of its 'evil' a certain mystique. Bad things happened, but the perpetrators ultimately found success rather than punishment, divine, diabolic or otherwise. The film's Satanists were affluent, cultured practitioners who suggested that with the right exercise of the will one could achieve wealth, status and power. What LaVey offered was a ready-made belief system that reflected this worldview and, ever the opportunist, he pushed ahead with the publication of *The Satanic Bible* (1969) to capitalise on the film's success. Standing with his doctrinal text in hand, LaVey was ready and waiting to welcome those prepared to follow the path marked out by *Rosemary's*

"Anyone who dares make a film about the Devil is asking for trouble"

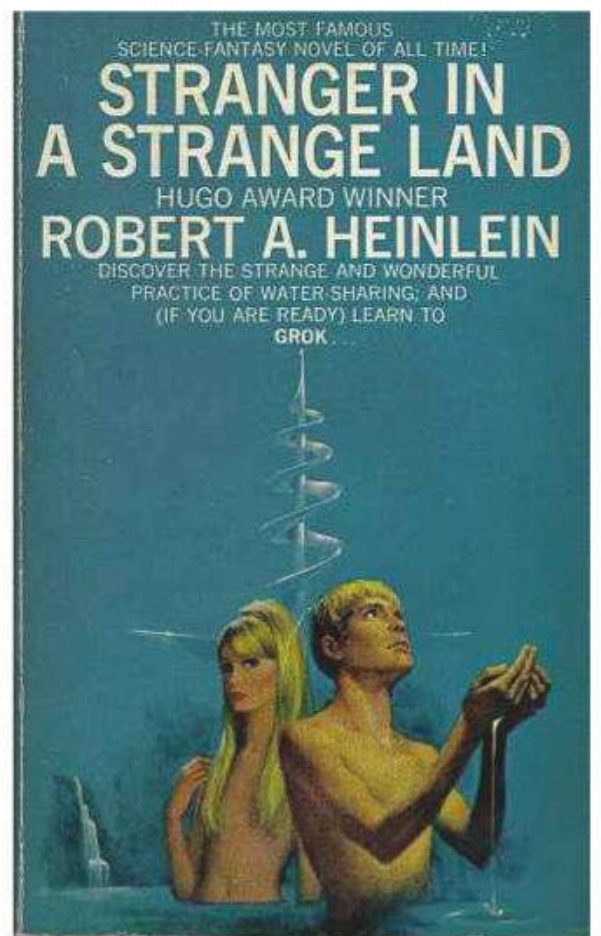
Baby and its mythology: a step across the line from the fiction of Satanism to its 'reality'.

Although it grew in the wake of Polanski's film, the Church of Satan was also born out of, and tapped into, what the writer Nat Freedland called America's late Sixties "occult explosion". Equally reflected in and fostered by the mainstream success of *Rosemary's Baby*, this revival of interest in tarot cards, astrology, paganism and other such topics was supported by the appearance of magazines like *Man*, *Myth and Magic* (1970-72) and *Coven 13* (1969-74). Books by and about Aleister Crowley, practical magick and folk-beliefs were easily available, and an increasing number of head shops were becoming occult dispensaries that supplied suburban witches with crystals, wands and black candles. At the same time, a slew of post-*Rosemary* occult thrillers like *The Deathmaster* (1972), *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973) and William Friedkin's all-pervasive *The Exorcist* (1973) installed the Devil as the ubiquitous face of horror in the early Seventies. Meanwhile, records by bands like The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Black Sabbath, Jacula, and Coven ensured that ideas of the occult, however hazily defined, were no longer confined to the shadows.

It was Arthur Brown who declared himself "the God of Hell-fire" at the start of his 1968 single "Fire" before treating the British audience of *Top of the Pops* to the

spectacle of him dancing with his head in flames. Brown would have been the perfect support act for Coven, who included the track "Satanic Mass" on their debut album, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls* (1969). Presented as "the first Black Mass to be recorded, either in written words or in audio", it was the real deal, according to the band, "as authentic as hundreds of hours of research in every known source can make it". As such, it was potentially just as harmful to the health of the listener as *Rosemary's Baby* was to those within range of its 'curse'. The band "did not recommend" the track to "anyone who has not thoroughly studied Black Magic and is aware of the risks and dangers involved".

This 'phenomenon', as Freedland puts it, invited the usual polarised responses. In his study *The Occult Explosion in America* (1972), Freedland cites the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox, who regarded the post-war popularity of astrology as a positive shift in the cultural landscape. It demonstrated how a "tight, bureaucratic society" could still find itself "fascinated with slipstream knowledge" – that which "doesn't fit". On the other hand, the clergyman William Sloane Coffin made a similar point about "America's renewed interest in occultism", but came to a far more negative conclusion, offering it as a "beautiful example of lobotomised passivity" that results from the "alienating influence of modernity". Summarising the debate, Freedland argued that whatever the assessment of public commentators, there was an overriding value connected to popular occultism: it had quickly proved to be "fashionably commercial". As *Time* magazine put it in their March 1969 cover story, "The Cult of the Occult", by the late Sixties it was estimated that this 'niche' interest had grown into something approaching a million-dollar 'industry'.⁶



ABOVE LEFT: The remains of Barker Ranch, Death Valley, where Manson and followers were arrested in October 1969 (for petty crimes unrelated to the murders).
ABOVE RIGHT: Robert E Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* was influential on both the Manson Family and the wider countercultural scene of the late Sixties.

THE 'OCCULT EXPLOSION'

Charles Manson and the Family emerged out of this post-war interest in 'slipstream knowledge'. Manson arrived in San Francisco in March 1967, having been in jail since 1961 on charges relating to prior parole violations and trafficking across state lines. While inside, Manson, the thief, hustler, conman and pimp, came under the sway of the usual prison influences, but he also read Robert Heinlein's science fiction novel *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), learnt about L Ron Hubbard, Dianetics and Scientology from his cellmate Lanier Ramer, and saw The Beatles perform on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964. When he arrived in San Francisco's growing countercultural enclave of Haight-Ashbury (see **FT356:40-47**), Manson would have benefitted from its crashpads, street charity and legal clinics, but he also would have been able to bask in the harmonious sense of good will and positive energy as the area transformed into the *symbolic* capital of the Summer of Love. He looked the part; he carried – along with practically every other new arrival – a guitar on which he played his own songs, and with a headful of The Beatles, Heinlein and Hubbard, he quickly tuned into the Haight's wavelength. With its communes, its cosmic mysticism, its emphasis on free sex and its clear desire to challenge the social mores of the day, *Stranger in a Strange Land* already had its place in the countercultural mindset when Manson arrived. Indeed, one of Heinlein's Martian coinages, the verb 'grok', meaning to know or to understand something to the point of absorption, had by 1967 become part of what Jay Stevens has called the "hippie *sprecht*". This "charged

*“Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!”
 LaVey preached*

code” helped to mark out one's membership of the counterculture while also succinctly expressing its key ideas. Manson grokked the Haight and the Haight grokked him back. ⁷

At the same time, artists like the filmmaker and magician Kenneth Anger (see **FT231:51-52**) were making grand claims about the historical significance of Haight-Ashbury and the community it supported. Anger saw the growth of the post-war counterculture as marking an epochal change in human culture, a transition to what he termed – following Aleister Crowley – the 'Aeon of Horus', a spiritual period defined by the “crowned and conquering child”. Others dubbed this paradigm shift the coming of the Age of Aquarius. Although Anton LaVey had little respect for his neighbours in the Haight, the seemingly passive and sheep-like 'hippies', the Church of Satan followed a similar tack. For LaVey, Satan was not a deity who demanded worship so much as an aspect of one's personality that required acknowledgement. “Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!” he preached from the pages of *The Satanic Bible*, “vital existence, instead of

spiritual pipe dreams!... undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit!” LaVey's Satanism encouraged a focus on the self, the exercise of individual desires in the absence of a Christian morality that pushes the guilt-ridden worshipper towards humility, piety and subservience to a higher authority. LaVey had no interest in the communality of the stereotypical San Franciscan counterculture but just like the hippies who gathered in Golden Gate Park for the Human Be-In in January 1967, the Church of Satan was stepping away from the expected conventions of American Society. ⁸

Writing in *The Family* (1971), his early account of the Manson case, Ed Sanders suggested that the tendrils of an occult conspiracy connected Manson, the Church of Satan and other groups like the Process Church of the Final Judgement (see **FT134:34-39**). These zones did overlap within the intense bubble of 1960s San Francisco: in 1966 Susan Atkins was a go-go dancer in a Witches' Sabbath-themed revue show organised by Anton LaVey; as he was gathering together the embryonic Family in 1967, Manson lived in Haight Ashbury close to the Process Church's San Francisco chapterhouse; and Family member Bobby Beausoleil was a close associate of Kenneth Anger, having starred in the first version of Anger's occult-epic *Lucifer Rising*. That said, such links are rather more coincidental than actively conspiratorial. The 'web', as it were, of associations that surround Manson and the Family speak less of a grand project with sinister intent and more to the fact that parallel, occasionally intersecting, groups proliferated in the mid to late 1960s. ⁹

America's 'Occult Explosion' was a typical

HELTER SKELTER: MUSIC FOR THE END?

Charles Manson believed The Beatles were communicating with him directly and chose the band's *White Album* as the soundtrack to his apocalyptic programme for social breakdown in Sixties America



ABOVE: A poster for the 1976 film starring Steve Railsback as Manson. BELOW: A graffiti-covered door retrieved from the Spahn Ranch, with 'Helter Skelter' again, but differently, misspelled.

"HEALTER SKELTER" (sic), the bloody writing left at the LaBianca residence, was a reference to "Helter Skelter", a Lennon and McCartney song from the 1968 album *The Beatles* (aka *The White Album*).

Paul McCartney named the song after the traditional English fairground ride and claimed its lyrics about ascents, descents and return trips "back to the top of the slide" were meant to evoke the "rise and fall of the Roman empire". It is likely that McCartney also had the post-1960s state of the British Empire in mind. Anthony Mann's film *The Fall of the Roman Empire* had made the rounds in 1964 and this, combined with the continued availability of its source text, Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (1776-89), had helped to establish "the ruins of Rome" as a tool for understanding the increasingly de-colonised state of Britain's overseas territories.¹

Manson had heard *The White Album* shortly after its release in November 1968. 'Helter Skelter' along with John Lennon's 'Happiness is a Warm Gun' and George Harrison's 'Piggies' became touchstones for him and the internal belief system he was generating for the Family. (The word 'Pig' was found scrawled in Sharon Tate's blood on the front door of 10050 Cielo Drive, while "Death to Pigs" was written on the walls of the LaBianca home in the victims' blood).

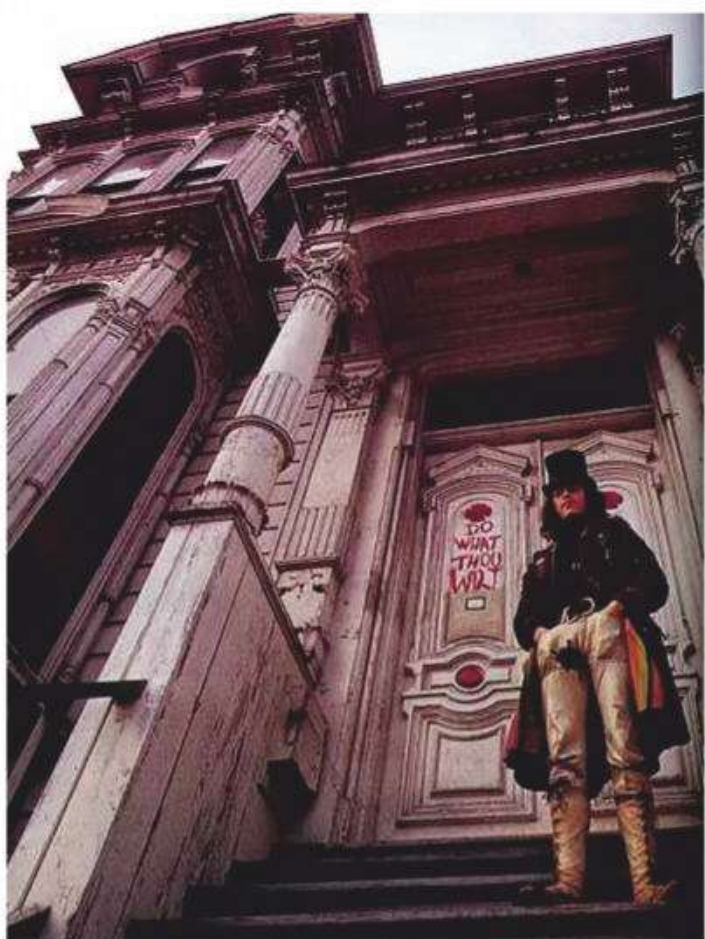


Manson believed the Beatles were trying to communicate with him directly, and what he got from the songs was not a reflection on Empire but a message of imminent societal breakdown. "Look out", said 'Helter Skelter', things are "coming down fast"; life's "getting worse", said 'Piggies', because the "bigger piggies" in their "starched white shirts" are "stirring up the dirt". They need "a damn good whacking", an intention that would lead to the empowerment, satisfaction and "happiness" of the "warm gun". Ensnared at the Spahn Ranch, a dilapidated former movie ranch on the Santa Susana Pass, the Family allowed this paranoia to boil away until 'Helter Skelter' came to name an event they were actively preparing for.

Whether Manson *really* believed this weirdly messianic personal narrative, the outline, as prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi discovered during the trial proceedings, went as follows. The *modus operandi* of the Family was to incite an apocalyptic race war between black and white America. They would do this by committing atrocious acts of murder in the homes of affluent white people, leaving suggestive evidence that the perpetrators were black. In the general chaos, as decades of racial tension and mutual distrust came to the fore, the Family would retreat to the desert of Death Valley in a convoy of high-powered dune buggies and descend into a secret subterranean world. There, in the company of the Beatles themselves, they would sit out the destructive black revolution. They would hide until the members of the newly sovereign black nation inevitably faltered in their unfamiliar role as leaders. At which point Manson, his growing band of disciples, and the Beatles would re-emerge from "the bottomless pit" and assume their place as rulers of the new dawn. This was 'Helter Skelter': the moment when the world as we, the squares and the straights, knew it would end and all that remained would come down to Manson as his rightful inheritance.²

¹ Origins of 'Helter Skelter' discussed in Barry Miles, *Paul McCartney: Many Years from Now* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp487-488; 'Ruins of Rome' from Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (London: Vintage, 2008) p.xv.

² Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter* (USA: W.W. Norton, 1974), p76, pp324-334.



BETTMANN / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE LEFT: Musician, murderer and Family member Bobby Beausoleil on the steps of Kenneth Anger's house at 1198 Fulton Street, San Francisco, in 1967. Crowley's 'Do What Thou Wilt' is written on the door. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan, was another frequent visitor to the house.

marker of a culture in transition. In the 1960s America was still finding its feet in the post-war landscape. Its youth culture was coalescing into a distinct demographic and the old institutions of government, family, church and employment were losing their potency. It is not surprising that significant numbers would look elsewhere for a sense of direction and personal validation. Esoteric ideas have a habit of blossoming in so-called secular societies when established structures begin to lose their grip. In the case of Charles Manson, though, while he couched the inner life of the Family in these ideas, his overall intentions had little to do with empowering his followers. Rather, he worked by imposing his will over them.

Manson often claimed to have magical powers. His followers, many of whom were young women in their late teens and early twenties, spoke of Rasputin-like hypnotic abilities. When, in mid-1969, he attempted to move the Family deeper into Death Valley to an isolated spot known as Barker Ranch, Manson came up against one Paul Crockett, a thoughtful prospector well versed in religious philosophy. Crockett attempted to "de-program" some of the Family but he felt the gravitational pull of Manson's influence. As he explained to Vincent Bugliosi, Crockett believed the intensity of Manson's control "was all part of the occult".¹⁰ In reality, Manson was a shrewd manipulator who used a combination of flattery, persuasion and force to gain people's confidence, then their obedience. His repeated riff was that the Family were the "garbage people", the misfits whom everyone – except Manson – had abandoned. They were special to him, but only because society had deemed them

worthless. Having established this 'Us and Them' mentality, it was easy for Manson to add to the mix his pseudo-religious misanthropy. When 'Helter Skelter' came, Manson would preach, and the world crumbled, it would be the Family who would take control of the kingdom. Provided, of course that they stayed loyal to Manson in the meantime.

That Manson's apocalyptic sermonising eventually led to the Tate-LaBianca atrocities makes it easy to condemn such cultish activities. The strange and terrible saga of the 'Love and Terror Cult' seems to make clear in retrospect where all this fascination with the esoteric was heading. However, Manson was not interested in exploring esoteric pursuits out of curiosity or the desire for knowledge, 'forbidden' or otherwise. From the start, his interest was focused on the exercise of power. He was keen to open the minds of his followers, but only to then step in and dominate their thinking. Elsewhere, within the occult scene of the 1960s, one could find committed and sensitive refusals of such authority. For those attracted to the 'cult of the occult', the Devil's business was an invitation to step away from the crowd and explore a sense of individual self-reliance. Charles Manson spoke about these ideas, but only came to exemplify the authority, cruelty and violence of the 'straight' world at its worst.

In the 50 years since the Tate-LaBianca murders a wealth of books and commentaries have speculated upon Manson's mindset and his place within the culture at large. It was Roman Polanski, however, who offered one of the most immediate and insightful responses to the case. His first film after Tate's death

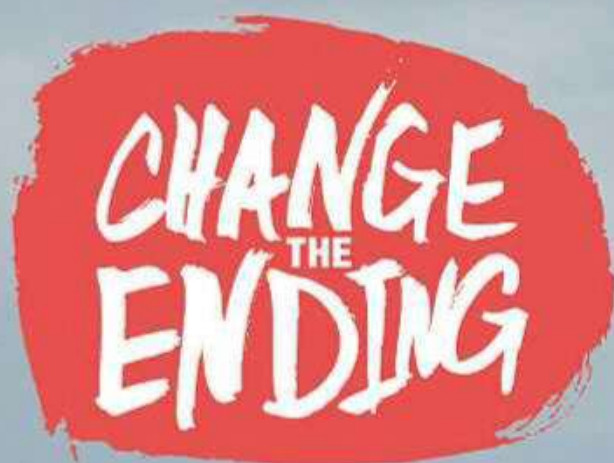
was an adaption of Shakespeare's bloody tragedy *Macbeth* (1971). With its three Weird Sisters, the film is saturated with magic, but the witches are not the source of the terrible events. All the malevolence and chaos come from Macbeth himself: it is his obsessive power trip that maps out a path to oblivion.

NOTES

- 1 Simon Wells, *Charles Manson: Coming Down Fast* (Hodder, 2009), pp280-283.
- 2 Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter* (WW Norton, 1974), p76.
- 3 Gary Lachman, *Turn Off Your Mind* (Disinformation, 2001), p6.
- 4 Wells, p239.
- 5 Nikolas Schreck, *The Satanic Screen* (Creation, 2000), pp137-9.
- 6 Nat Freedland, *The Occult Explosion in America* (Michael Joseph, 1972), p14.
- 7 Wells, pp33-4; Jay Stevens, 'Night Thoughts About the Sixties', in Peter O Whitmer and Bruce VanWyngarden, *Aquarius Revisited* (Citadel, 1991), ppiii-vi.
- 8 Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship and Rock 'n' Roll* (Plexus, 1999), pp66-78.
- 9 Ed Sanders, *The Family* (EP Dutton, 1971).
- 10 Bugliosi, p315.

Adapted and extracted from James Riley, *The Bad Trip: Dark Omens, New Worlds and the End of the Sixties*, 2019. Out now from Icon Books.

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Hundreds of children died

In 2018, cases of measles in Europe tripled to more than 80,000 — a record number for this decade. Yet, according to the World Health Organisation, less than 2% of those cases occurred in the UK.

Such has been the success of the NHS' decades-long vaccination programme that we have all but eliminated measles in the UK. In doing so, we may have forgotten the true horror of a deadly virus which still kills more than 300 children worldwide every single day.

Measles can infect the lungs and brain. Measles causes pneumonia, blindness and death. It is extremely contagious and — when combined with high levels of malnutrition — is practically unstoppable.

Last autumn, hundreds of children tragically died in a sudden outbreak of measles in Madagascar.

MAF trusted to bring healing

In a land where the vast majority of the population live on less than £2 per day, the cost of life-saving treatment is beyond most people's reach.

More than 100,000 cases of measles have been registered since the outbreak began in September 2018 and the newspapers reported many tragic stories of families losing several children to the disease.

In response to the tragedy, the

Madagascan government and several NGOs formed an emergency action group with the bold ambition to offer free vaccinations to every child between nine months and nine years.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) were called to help.

MAF is the world's largest humanitarian airline, bringing life-saving medical care, food, disaster relief and community development to some of the remotest places on earth. In the 27 countries they serve, MAF is trusted for its unique ability to respond rapidly to life-or-death situations.

Tens of thousands saved

On the day of the first emergency flight to Morafenobe, the staff were busy loading boxes of vaccines, syringes and other medical supplies onto the MAF Cessna Caravan. In the hangar, dry ice was packed around the vaccines to keep them at the necessary temperature for several days.



A journey that would have taken a punishing three-days on mud roads — putting the vaccinations at risk of damage and overheating — takes MAF less than an hour.



As box after box of vaccines was unloaded at Morafenobe, Ambatomainty, Mananara and Sainte Marie, 50,000 children were assured of receiving a gift more precious than they are old enough to understand.

'There will be a lot of screaming going on in the isolated villages,' Charlotte Pedersen, MAF Madagascar's Communication Officer, reflects. 'But rather the children screaming for a few minutes than the mothers crying and grieving for the loss of their beloved child'.

For over 70 years, MAF has become a trusted symbol of life to generations of isolated people living in urgent need of help, hope and healing.

To see how you could be part of changing endings like this, visit www.maf-uk.org/changetheending

THEIR SATANIC MAJESTIES REQUEST...

With the release of Penny Lane's film *Hail Satan?* we despatched FT's resident vicar, **PETER LAWS**, to talk to Satanic Temple spokesperson and co-founder **LUCIEN GREAVES** about Satanic Panics, non-theistic religions and whether they'd ever see eye-to-eye about Jesus...

PL: Others have wanted to make films or reality series about the work of The Satanic Temple (TST), and yet *Hail Satan?* is the first time you have really opened the doors to the media. Why did you feel the time was right?

LG: Despite the theatrics, we've always been discerning in our approach to media. We are not interested in reality television-style explorations of the everyday lives of Satanists. TST is a movement whose time has come, and we want people to consider the cultural factors that have made Satanism so widely relevant today. We are not interested in being "humanised" or "normalised," and we really do not care if our individual lifestyles are adjudged respectable, deviant, banal, or bizarre by any outside standards. We assert our right to be who we are, and we want people to have a more accurate understanding of what that is (and isn't).

The countless other filmmakers that approached us prior to Penny Lane had very specific ideas regarding the type of story they wanted to tell, and most of them showed little regard for what TST actually is. Penny was not dissuaded when I told her that we would not stage events, engage in re-enactments, or manufacture interpersonal conflicts for any documentary film. She understood that we are interested in issues, not celebrity. She did not try to script the story before knowing what the story was. It wasn't that this was the right time, it was that Penny was the right director.

PL: What are the aims of the film?

LG: In the beginning, I was encouraging Penny to make a documentary entirely focused on our Grey Faction campaign, a belated Satanist response to the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and 90s. A lot of Satanists who populated TST in the beginning were ironically products of the Satanic Panic, having grown up in the midst of an anti-Satanist hysteria that developed into a full-on witch-hunt. Many kids at that time were told that the music they were listening to, the games they were playing, the books they were reading, were all Satanic, which had the unintended consequence of giving



"I myself have identified as a Satanist for my entire adult life"

some of them an affinity with Satanism, while creating a feedback loop wherein the aesthetic of their preferred entertainments were absorbed into the aesthetic of Satanism. The Satanic Panic saw the mainstreaming of bizarre conspiracy theories involving alleged Satanic cults that were said to be engaged in infant sacrifice, cannibalism, and ritual abuse. Deranged, pseudoscience-based therapists in the mental health profession used hypnotic regression, sodium amytal interviews, and other discredited techniques for aiding in the alleged recovery of "repressed memories" of these activities – the same techniques used to cultivate "memories" of alien abductions and past lives – creating a whole network of mistreated clients with delusions of a Satanic conspiracy. Nothing has been done since then to address the role of mental health care quackery in the Satanic Panic, and the same pseudoscientific practices and

conspiracy theories are still propagated in the mental health care profession today. TST's Grey Faction campaign has been fighting for rational mental health care oversight that would address this problem. I thought it would make an excellent documentary to trace the evolution of Satanism from the Satanic Panic to The Satanic Temple and show how Satanists are fighting back against the witch-hunters. Penny opted for a broader overview, and I'm impressed with how concisely she addressed so many topics and issues in an entertaining, easy to follow, hour-and-a-half.

PL: Many critics suggest TST began as 'a joke' that has now got out of hand...

LG: When people hear that we originally envisioned an activist film, they assume that the philosophical beliefs were an afterthought meant to substantiate that project. Satanism was not chosen arbitrarily as the religious identity to pursue the objective of presenting an alternative viewpoint to advance pluralism, however. I myself have self-identified as a Satanist for my entire adult life. Add to that our willingness to engage in pranksterism and exploit the absurdity of our opposition, and many people have a bizarre knee-jerk reaction that insists humour and sincerity cannot coexist; activism excludes religious authenticity, and nontheistic religion is merely an oxymoron meant to confuse and outrage fundamentalists. We originally envisioned that our film would inspire a decentralised uprising of Satanists unified under the banner of The Satanic Temple to pursue equal access claims and build local Satanic communities. As soon as we got started, however, the press attention was more than anticipated, the demands for formal affiliation flooded in, and the need for a spokesperson to clarify it all was immediate. Our message was getting out to the world already, and we were able to start a real organisation around our deeply-held beliefs, which could sustain a worldwide community. Ironically, I think that it is the unusual honesty in our presentation, devoid of self-glorifying myth-making, that leads some to conclude that we are a joke.

PL: The film shows TST as being passionately involved in current affairs; some Satanists (and some Christians) argue that religion should be 'apolitical'. Do you believe that religion must be present on the public stage?

LG: I see TST not as a force demanding the presence of religion on the public stage, but rather we are acknowledging religion's pre-existing encroachment into public affairs while offering a counterbalance against a heretofore unchallenged privilege enjoyed by Christian nationalists. TST has never demanded representation in a public forum where there were not already religious displays or activities taking place. In fact, I personally feel that it would be best if religion were left out of public forums. But if religion is already present, it is our duty to see that pluralism is respected, and ensure that one viewpoint is not enjoying exclusive access to the public commons.

PL: Satanism celebrates independent thought, which has prompted some Satanists to criticise TST for promoting a left-leaning, libertarian political perspective...

LG: Satanism is a socio-political mythological framework that provides a narrative regarding the fall of Dark Age feudalistic Christendom and the rise of Enlightenment values: democratic ideals of individual liberty, pluralism, and free inquiry. Satan as an icon of revolt against tyranny has political implications. We believe in secular pluralism: a viewpoint-neutral government that respects religious diversity and is limited from imposing preferential regard for, or restrictions against, any one religious perspective, including non-belief, over another. To me, it is senseless to say that religion should be apolitical, and that we, as a religion, must remain entirely silent as a religious majority invades secular politics in an attempt at a theocratic coup. We are not "leading by example" if we do nothing. That said, TST has consistently stood on very clear principles without blindly embracing political fads on the left or right. While some on the right believe they denigrate us by calling us "Satanic Justice Warriors" some on the left have developed a conspiracy theory that we are secretly alt-right because we advocate non-violent activism. Similarly, we advocate Free Speech, which was a distinctly leftist cause till recent times, and now it is believed by some that a respect for Free Speech is merely an endorsement of the most odious forms of Hate Speech. Political fads will come and go, but Satanism is here to stay.

PL: People sometimes mix you up with the Church of Satan. However, there are some significant differences between the two most prominent Satanic organisations today. What are they and are you in dialogue together?

LG: The Church of Satan was never terribly big, nor were they ever terribly active. They did, however, cultivate a very strong belief that they hold a monopoly over all things Satanic and have waxed apoplectic every time we have



been in the news. They cannot seem to grasp why TST is gaining all of this international attention for activities that impact current affairs while nobody is interviewing them about their "ritual chambers". They have tried desperately to delegitimise us and spread false information about us. Their real objection is that we identify as Satanists while they claim to hold exclusive rights on Satanism. We are not in dialogue with them and, frankly, there is nothing that could be gained from any alliance with them.

PL: The 'seven tenets' of TST focus on compassion, empathy and the nobility of human life. These seem almost Christlike in their outlook. Fundamentalist evangelicals notwithstanding, would the TST feel an affinity to the more loving and progressive interpretations of Jesus?

Satanism is something that has developed into its own set of affirmative values devoid of any compulsory disdain for Christianity. Our fight is against superstition and theocracy. To be clear, we would push back just as hard against *any* organised attempt to legislate preference for a particular religion as we do against the Christian nationalists in the US. When we held our rally for religious pluralism in Arkansas, which serves as the climactic scene in *Hail Satan?*, my own speech was preceded by a speech delivered by a Christian minister whom we invited, and who fully understood who we are and the importance of our message. Despite attempts by theocrats to present themselves as representatives for the entirety of the Christian faith, there have been no shortage of Christians who themselves raised their voices in objection to pandering politicians claiming ownership of their faith and trying to impose it upon others. There are so many conflicting interpretations of Jesus – ranging from the radical communist to the pious conservative – that it would be strange if we did not have an overlap in values with some of them.

PL: TST is non-theistic, but speaking purely hypothetically, would you like there to be a real Satan, or indeed a real God?

Personally, I am comfortable living in a Universe that is not ordered upon the arbitrary whims of divine beings. I see beauty in a Universe constructed upon evolutionary principles, bottom-up, rather than top-down by an omniscient consciousness. The answers are ours to find, the discoveries ours to make, our futures our own to navigate. While I acknowledge that we can never be 100 per cent certain of anything, uncertainty is not *carte blanche* to propose equal legitimacy for bizarre and grossly improbable claims with what can be empirically supported. That said, however, I am most drawn to the outliers and anomalies, and I am always deeply interested in that which challenges entrenched assumptions. Not everything that can be known is now understood, and I think the Satanist generally embraces opportunities to explore the unilluminated fringes.

PL: The IRS has officially recognised TST as a church, affording it tax-exempt status. How significant is this victory, and what breakthroughs are you focusing on next?

It is a significant victory, the immediate upshot of which is that the State of Arkansas, whom we are currently in litigation against, finds that they must now abandon their entire legal defence against our claim of religious discrimination. They were arguing that TST is not a 'legitimate' religious organisation, and that therefore our claim of religious discrimination was moot. The IRS is the only Federal agency that has any type of test for determining religious legitimacy, and far be it from Arkansas to impose some new and self-serving set of standards of their own. We are now recognised as a Church, and we can claim equal access to all exemptions and privileges conferred by that status. As theocrats continue to fight to expand the benefits of "Religious Freedom" they will be inadvertently aiding in a proliferation of Satanism. Future historians will look back and say that it was an attempted Evangelical theocratic coup in the United States that helped to birth a new Satanic era.

Hail Satan? is reviewed on p69.

RED RIVER DAVE: THE HUMAN HEADLINE

DAVID THRUSSEL explores the forgotten songbook of Red River Dave McEnery, whose often fortean subjects – from the disappearance of Amelia Earhart to the Manson Family murders and the Jonestown Massacre – were torn straight from the headlines, recorded within days, and released in mythically tiny private pressings.

What do Adolf Hitler, Marilyn Monroe, Charles Manson, Lee Harvey Oswald, John F Kennedy, Patty Hearst, Neil Armstrong, Amelia Earhart, Ronald Reagan and E.T. have in common?

All were immortalised on record by Hillbilly troubadour extraordinaire, Red River Dave McEnery.

Notorious for his 1970 song ‘California Hippie Murders!’ – a ghoulish, harrowing, yodelled retelling of the infamous, Manson-masterminded Tate-La-Bianca slayings – Red River Dave was a genuine cowboy singing star turned tabloid balladeer. While ‘California Hippie Murders!’ might initially seem both chilling and bizarre – its graphic verses punctuated by howling, heartfelt yodels – it makes perfect sense when seen in the context of Red River Dave’s greater body of work, an epic American songbook described here in detail for the very first time.

HILBILLY SONG-MILL

Singing human headline, prodigious topical balladeer, industrial songsmith, inspirational speaker, vigilant town crier, professional patriot, landscape painter, TV pitchman, realtor, roofer, appliance salesman, musical instrument retailer, tireless self-promoter, Freemason, Baptist, preacher-man and rope-trick carny, McEnery embodied the American Dream of boundless energy, frontier individualism, fortean autodidacticism and bottomless entrepreneurial spirit, with all its attendant triumphs and unavoidable pitfalls.

Through some alchemic accident, he was destined to channel the tumultuous events of the later 20th century US experience into an astounding series of largely privately-pressed and hand-crafted 45s, sold via mail-order, hawked at modest public appearances, touted over local radio



Dave was a cowboy singing star turned tabloid balladeer

or proffered from the boot of his roaming steer-horned Cadillac.

The Moon landings, the kidnapping of heiress Patty Hearst, the Vietnam conflict, the assassination of JFK, the murder of young Emmett Till, Korean War ‘Manchurian Candidate’ brainwashing, patriotic tirades and Cold War

FACING PAGE: David McEnery – better known as Red River Dave – in a publicity shot from 1981.

LEFT: Dave adds ventriloquism to his prodigious list of talents.

dirges – all were grist to the great, yet largely forgotten, Red River Dave hillbilly song-mill that operated from the 1930s right through to the 1980s. Often cut within hours or days of the events they addressed, the songs were pressed in minuscule editions. Some of his sides are now so rare as to be near-mythical, an eccentric country-folk song-cycle on the margins of musical history.

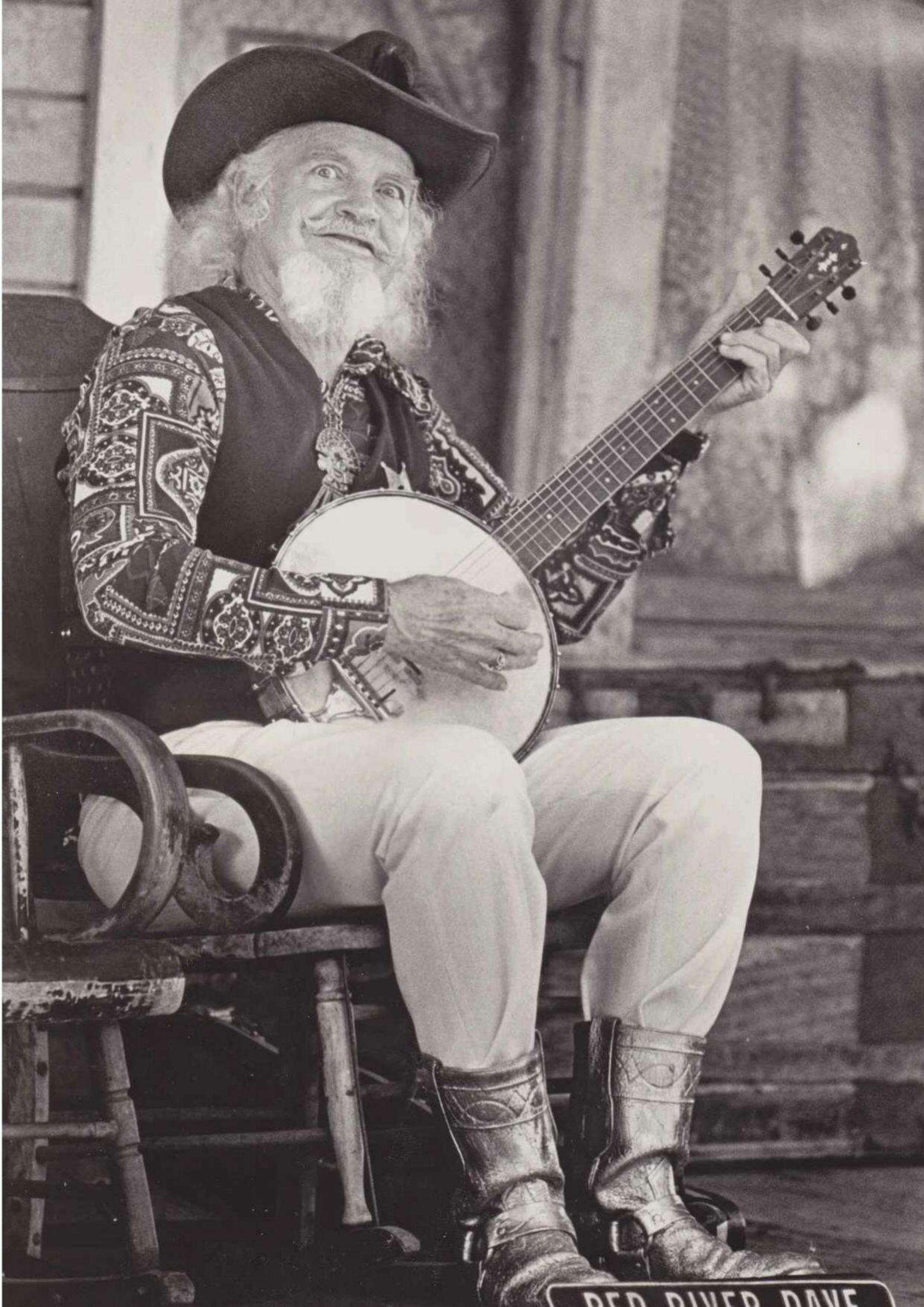
The tall, flamboyant, ‘Buffalo Bill’-bearded McEnery cut a dashing figure with his gold-sprayed cowboy boots and cracking lariat. An obscure yet somehow legendary figure, Red River Dave was the kind of storied travelling troubadour who deserves a weighty volume to fully chronicle his countless exploits and adventures.

David Largus McEnery was born on 15 December 1914 and raised as a cowboy yodeller and lasso twirler “within a rifle shot of the Alamo” in San Antonio. He was forced to leave home and Depression-hit Texas at the age of 16 as his family struggled with poverty, and spent the next five years hobo-rambling on freight trains from New York to California, searching for work and singing for nickels in restaurants. Eventually, he was hired as a singing radio cowboy in Petersburg, Virginia. The year was 1935, and in nearby Hopewell tragedy struck.

A school bus drove through an open drawbridge and crashed into the river below. Moved by the scores of drowned children, McEnery picked up his pen.

“I called it ‘The Hopewell Bus Tragedy,’” he said. “We





RED RIVER DAVE



RED RIVER DAVE SETTING A NEW WORLD'S RECORD IN MARATHON SONG WRITING WHILE CHAINED TO A PIANO
Half way through his eight hour grind, Dave works under the watchful eyes of the judges and fans.



LEFT: Dave sets a world record, penning 52 songs while chained to a piano. **ABOVE:** One of Dave's many film appearances from the 1940s. **BELOW:** Sheet music for a Red River Dave classic.

got bushels-full of mail. I just said to myself, 'I have to write more of these things.'"

Never allergic to publicity, in 1936 McEnery boarded a Goodyear Blimp and sang live on CBS radio station WQAM while hovering over Miami.

A year later, Dave and his band were in New York State, trying to raise money to get to a radio date in Chicago by playing churches and nightclubs along the way. Aviatrice Amelia Earhart had recently vanished into the Pacific Ocean void, and one night around the campfire McEnery sat on a rock and picked out a new song as his stew cooked. The sublime 'Amelia Earhart's Last Flight' was the result, and when he debuted the song in Buffalo it brought the house down.

"The nightclub said, 'we're not going to pay you anything but if you want to go ahead and be on the show, any money that is thrown out on the floor, you can keep,'" he remembered.

"She'd been in the news and was still hot on everybody's mind. So I just began to sing. 'Air ship out o'er the ocean, just a speck against the sky...' I tore the house down. The money and the dollars. I'd never seen anything like it in my life. I said, 'I've really got something. I can live off this song.' I really felt I had a real piece of Americana written there."

THE BEST YEARS

By 1938, 'Red River Dave' (so named for his propensity for singing 'Red River Valley' when in high school) was a genuine singing cowboy star. Then resident in South Ozone Park, Queens, he was beamed coast-to-coast on radio WOR from New York and was soon recording prolifically for Decca, Continental, Musicraft and many other

labels.

As Dave told it, he was also the first ever hillbilly to sing live on television and, indeed, the first ever paid television performer, broadcasting 'Amelia Earhart's Last Flight' with his band from the 1939 New York World's Fair.

Eventually, the song would sell in the millions and became a timeless folk/country standard performed by Kinky Friedman, Joan Baez and countless others. "I still get royalties on that one," he noted years later. At this point, WWII intervened and McEnery signed up for two years' service as an infantryman before returning stateside and resuming his singing career.

Dotted amongst his busy post-war discography of cowboy and Western fare were also some notable topical ballads

and emotive journalistic odes, like 'Hitler Lives' (recorded to great affect by Rosalie Allen in 1947), a remarkable song that highlighted rumours of the Nazi leader's reputed survival in Argentina after the war, as detailed in recently released FBI memos, counterpointed against the plight of neglected WWII veterans.

"Back then, a lot of guys sang songs about whatever was happening in the world," Dave recalled. "Kidnappings, murders, disasters, famous people dying – it was all grist."

For a couple of years, McEnery moved in and out of Hollywood and featured in horse-opera 'talkies' like *Swing in the Saddle* (1944), *Hidden Valley Days* (1948) and *Echo Ranch* (1948) – the video-jukeboxes of their day – strumming his guitar and dazzling the gals with a high lonesome tune.

Once, in 1946, at San Antonio radio station WOAI, he took a bet that allowed him to display his prodigious songwriting skills. He sat handcuffed to a piano for 12



2 I'd Like To Give My Dog To Uncle Sam
HAWAIIAN GUITAR
Key of G A MAJOR (LOW BASS) TUNING By DAVE McENERY
Moderately (with feeling) Arr. by the OAHU STAFF

VERSE

There are he-ros on the bat-tle-fields and where the white waves toss But here's the great-est he-ro I
As the blind boy told his sto-ry there, my eyes were filled with tears He was the brav-est he-ro I

TENOR

ev-er ran a - cross He was just a lit-tle blind boy who loved his coun-try so
seen in all my years And al-though he was a blind boy, his heart and soul could see

hours (“not goin’ to the bathroom or nothin’”) and composed 52 songs (“Every tune was different, too”) with lyrics inspired by news magazines or topics suggested by the crowd. “Indeed, I did, yes I did, I surely did, yup!” he recalled with pride.

“Those were my best years,” he remarked concerning the 1940s and 50s. His songs were often recorded by big Country music stars like Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold, Tex Ritter, Jimmie Davis, and Flatt and Scruggs (Elvis even did a couple of takes on ‘A Hundred Years from Now’ in 1970) as well as a host of lesser-known artists. McEnery remained a New York radio fixture until 1952, when he moved back to San Antonio and headed up a popular TV show for seven years. “The hurting started when filmed TV came along and live TV died. For 14 years, I was just forgotten.”

SINGING COWBOY REALTOR

Dave moved into property, operating as the president of Red River Dave Real Estate in San Antonio, with sidelines in mail-order musical instrument sales, numerous further topical 45rpm releases (sometimes billing him as the ‘Singing Cowboy Realtor’) and an unsuccessful tilt at public office in 1968 as a Democratic Party candidate for County Chairman, in which he invited “people of all races, creeds and occupations to take part”. In June 1974 tragedy struck: Dave’s wife of almost 35 years, Alberta, died horribly in a domestic fire. He “arrived home as the fire was being extinguished, but was unable to identify the body.” Devastated, he moved to Nashville to try his luck but found “thousands of songwriters who were sleeping in cars.”

But the still flamboyant-looking Dave was a natural showman and inveterate entrepreneur. He soon opened a ‘Cowboy Church’ at the Country Music Hall of Fame Motor Inn where he would perform rope tricks while preaching to wayward musicians. He was reputedly the “first and perhaps only person ever to deliver a sermon entirely in CB jargon.”

“What I was doing had real flair. I made the front page of *The Tennessean*. It was a fine thing fundamentally, but I ran afoul of my second wife [Velma Lee]. So, I went to Texas, got a divorce and headed to California.”

All the while Red River Dave continued to write and perform, working at Knott’s Berry



LEFT: Dave rocks the post-Waylon and Willie outlaw look in this 1978 photo from the Texa Folklife Festival. **BELOW:** The iconic singing cowboy in his younger days, complete with horse.

prodigious, articulate, witty, artful and heartfelt. A patriot and a humanist, Dave’s work sometimes invited controversy: a live rendition on WOAI of his heart-breaking Civil Rights lament ‘The Ballad of Emmett Till’ generated both anger and praise in equal measure.

Much of his unique songbook has lain dormant or neglected for decades. The 45rpm sides seen here were sometimes pressed in tiny runs of just 100 or 200, and often recorded mere hours or days after a tragedy or news story. ‘Answer to the Death of a President!’ was, for example, pressed on 23 November 1963 – the day after President Kennedy’s assassination (see FT333:42-46 for the musical history of the JFK assassination). Sides like ‘Games of Death – Olympics 1972’, ‘The Fate of Lt. Calley’, ‘The Ballad of Three Mile Island’, ‘Atlanta’s Black Children’, ‘The Watergate Blues’ and a song about the Jonestown massacre are even more mythical;

some might only ever have been live radio broadcasts or sold so few copies as to have completely vanished.

McEnery’s most outlandish recording, ‘California Hippie Murders!’, dealt with the gruesome slaying of film director Roman Polanski’s then-pregnant wife Sharon Tate and members of her entourage by followers of mystic/jailbird/Beach Boy consort Charles Manson. The song was written and pressed during the height of the Manson Family trial and sold in sadly unremarkable numbers from the boot of Red River Dave’s Cadillac in Nashville. Today, three original copies of this astounding 45 are known to exist, one of them reputedly changing hands in private dealer circles for over \$5,000.

Effortless and yet often sublime, the topical songs of Red River Dave are precious musical portals into other eras and forgotten landscapes. Every day, McEnery would rise, read the morning paper and write a song: “It must be part of my karma, I write them so well and so easy. Indeed, I do, yes, I do, yup! I think it’s important to balladise the news. I’m kind of like Johnny Appleseed. Yes, I am, indeed I am.”

“I’m the last of the red-white-and-blue singing cowboys and that’s all... but I never missed a meal.”

◆ **DAVID THRUSSEL** is a musician/composer/writer/record label mogul/filmmaker/closet-hillbilly who lives deep in the Australian outback and is best avoided.



Farm, swinging his lariat and singing about the Falklands War, Korean Flight 007, the Ayatollah Khomeini, *E.T.* and other hot topics, until his death on 15 January 2002 at the age of 87.

As a valiant sunset troubadour in the epic tradition of saga or event songs, Red River Dave knew no equal; his output was



GAMBLING ON THE UNBELIEVABLE

In nearly half a century as a bookmaker **GRAHAM SHARPE** accepted bets on everything from proof of Nessie's existence being discovered to the US President confirming the reality of extraterrestrial visitors. Now retired, he shares the wackiest wagers of his long career...



COURTESY GRAHAM SHARPE

ABOVE: British mountaineer Chris Bonington places a 150/1 £10 bet that he will produce conclusive evidence of the Yeti's existence.

Iretired in 2017, having worked in the bookmaking business for almost half a century. I had joined William Hill in 1972 and quickly became known for accepting bets on virtually anything and everything that customers were prepared to speculate on. In those days, horse and greyhound racing accounted for over 90 per cent of the company's business, with major sports making up the rest. My job was to get as much publicity for the company as possible, and I quickly identified accepting unusual and bizarre bets as a key way of achieving media coverage.

Bets on the weather – how hot it would get in the summer? Would it snow at Christmas? – resulted in rich publicity pickings. In 1976's scorching summer I offered odds of 10/1 for predicting the day on which it would next rain in London, garnering huge coverage. Two years later, as the weather resumed its default soggy position I was able to persuade both the *Sun* and *Daily Mirror* to run banner front page headlines of, respectively, 'Betcha It Won't Rain!' and 'Sodden Awful', carrying the news that Hills were now betting on when the summer deluge would stop.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's brother,

Piers, is a professional physicist and meteorologist, and he started betting hefty sums with me – up to £600 a month during the 1990s – on very specific weather predictions. It proved very difficult to beat him, to the extent that my bosses eventually gave him a frosty reception, ruled him too hot to handle and cold-shouldered all future weather wagers from him.

Introducing betting interest into TV programmes – who shot JR? for starters, followed by odds on events in the big soap operas like *Corrie* and *East Enders* – proved popular.

Letting people bet on themselves turned out to be irresistible. Forty-year-old Deborah Dale from Newcastle-under-Lyme bet £50 on herself losing 12 stone in weight from a starting weight of 31 stone during 2001; she duly collected £1,000 when she shed 168lb. Others bet on how old they'd live to be and pregnant women on when their babies would put in an appearance; one lady even bet that she'd appear on the cover of *Vogue*.

I encouraged bets from proud parents on their children growing up to achieve great feats, sporting and otherwise. In 2000, Pete Edwards took me up on it and risked £50 at 2,500/1 odds that his three year old grandson, Harry Wilson, would grow up to play football at senior level for Wales. Thirteen years later, Harry became the youngest player ever to win a senior cap for his country, coming on as substitute in a match against Belgium and clinching a £125,000 pay-out for grandad Pete, who immediately quit work – as I almost did when one of my bosses told me he regarded it as a sacking offence to have accepted such a bet. This despite the positive media coverage it secured for the company being estimated at around £10 million!

Andrew Wright gained A grades in 11 subjects in 1996 – good news for his father, David, who had bet £50 at 20/1 on him doing so and won £1,000. I had realised the odds might have been a little on the generous side when the boy's headmaster placed his own bet of £10, which won him £200.

MONSTER STAKES

I soon started to receive requests for many forteen-style wagers, initially along the lines of "What odds against proof of UFOs/extraterrestrial life/ghosts will you offer?"

The first two were quite simple to deal with and the standard offer became 100/1 that either the current President of the USA or the current UK Prime Minister would officially confirm the current existence of intelligent extraterrestrial life within 10 years of the bet being placed.

But in 2010 I took a single bet of £1,000 at odds of 1,000/1 from a client in Wiltshire (home, of course, to the UFO hotspot of Warminster) that within a year conclusive proof of intelligent extraterrestrial life would be forthcoming. The client hoped to be £1million better off as a result. He wasn't.

Despite accepting these bets, I'm afraid a worthwhile definition of conclusive proof of the existence of ghosts consistently eluded me. However, I did come across some



LEFT: The author with Screaming Lord Sutch and some of the other Nessie expedition leaders at the 1980s 'Monster Hunt Weekend'.

1980s, with a £1million prize on offer for anyone proving the existence of Nessie. A small flotilla of searchers appeared on the water, some utilising the latest sonar scanning techniques, but the media focused on eccentric politician Screaming Lord Sutch, who arrived armed with some British Rail sandwiches he'd acquired on his trip up, which he used as Nessie bait while paddling in the shallows of the Loch.

However, this bet did land me in financial meltdown at one point when some cunning customers seized on the discovery in the Loch Ness area of previously unknown nematodes and demanded payment – which, in order to avoid adverse publicity, my boss insisted that we should cough up. I was not amused.

On a similar theme, in 1988 I sponsored a Yeti Hunt led by renowned British climber Chris Bonington, who was

also attempting to scale a previously unconquered peak in the Himalayas. As his group left, they placed a 500/1 bet that they would bring back proof of the Yeti's existence. In a blaze of publicity, Bonington returned to the UK, carrying with him what he considered conclusive proof that the Yeti/Abominable Snowman was real – only to have it confiscated at customs and destroyed by the Department of Agriculture before it could even be checked out.

BETTING ON THE END

This was all a little far-out, but then Matthew Dumbrell wrote to me from Hampstead Garden Suburb. Would I, he asked, accept a bet from him that: "This world will end with a Big Bang at exactly 12.50pm GMT on Wednesday 11 August, 1999 AD."

I told him I would, and that he could choose his own odds; he settled for 1,000,000/1, staking £1 – but how might we be able to pay out in the event that his prediction came true?

"We can settle up in eternity later that day," he suggested, "where I am sure God will be well advised by the founder of your company." (The eponymous William Hill had died in 1971.)

Having lost out once, Mr Dumbrell tried again in May 2000 with a similar wager, "that the end of time will not be later than midnight, Saturday, 31 December, 2000 AD".

Nothing if not persistent, he kept coming back, telling me comfortingly: "Whenever

I organised a 'Monster Hunt Weekend' with a £1 million prize

haunted betting shops. One, in Birmingham, was run by Peter Casson, who recalled two members of staff locking up and waiting at the bus stop over the road when they spotted a lad still inside the shop. They rushed back over, opened up the shop and searched it, finding no one.

Staff at a shop in Rhyl, North Wales, named their in-shop spectre 'Little Sue', after a former member of staff was tragically killed nearby, and customers and cleaners began to report ghostly goings-on attributed to her. When staff in a Launceston, Cornwall, betting office had a 'team' photograph taken, according to manager Jane Whitaker, "there was a ghostly apparition in the background".

Around this time I also began to take bets on proof of the existence of a previously unknown creature in Loch Ness responsible for all or some of the confirmed sightings of the 'Monster', with similar odds attached. I even sponsored and organised a 'Monster Hunt Weekend' at the Loch in the late



ABOVE: The author and Chris Bonington, about to embark on Yeti Hunt '88.

the chief bookmaker in the sky opens the seventh and final seal, may your name also be in the Book of Life.”

It wasn't the Book of Life that Isle of Wight man Geoff Sartin contacted me in 1996 to bet on. Jobless Geoff, 43, was caring for his poorly wife, Barbara, after she had undergone three heart operations. While he was hypnotising her one day, he told me, she had revealed the date on which she would die: 25 March 2007. Geoff wanted to bet that her prediction would come true by staking £100 at odds of 10,000/1, potentially worth £1million. He explained that "death comes to us all, and if there's a chance for the remaining partner to be comfortably off, then one must try." It was okay, he added, Barbara didn't mind. "I'm fully in agreement with Geoff's bet," she said. "The money will give me a good send-off. I want my coffin pulled through the streets by a black horse and carriage."

Despite his unconvincing “I’d be delighted if the bet was a loser”, I disappointed Geoff by explaining that I wasn’t comfortable with the thought of this unprecedented request

and declined the bet. I did, though, mention it to the *Sun*'s Chief Reporter, John Kay, who wrote a story about it in the paper.

Some years later I looked at my office calendar and wondered why the date of 25 March 2007 rang a dim and distant bell. Geoff Sartin's name jumped into my mind for the first time in over 10 years. That was it: today was the day Geoff Sartin had wanted to bet would be his wife's last.

I rang John Kay at the *Sun*, suggesting a follow-up story. He loved the idea and rushed off to check out Geoff's contact details. Some hours later he was back on the phone: "This is bizarre. There's no trace of the family at their old address, none at all anywhere on the Isle of Wight and we can find no email or phone details, and no reference to Geoff or Barbara wherever we search..."

On another occasion, though, I did allow one particular person to place a bet on beating the death sentence his doctors had served on him. Jon Matthews was diagnosed with terminal mesothelioma in early 2007 and told he was unlikely still to be alive by the end of that year. In his late fifties and a

regular customer at a William Hill shop near Milton Keynes, Jon contacted me to ask if I would accept bets that he would defy the terminal prognosis.

I was impressed by always be-hatted Jon's insistence that positive thought could extend his life, and accepted his £100 bet that he would still be alive on 1 June 2008 at odds of 50/1; another £100 that he would still be alive on 1 June 2009 at the same odds, and a third of £100, this time at 100/1, that he would make it to 1 June 2010.

The indefatigable Jon steamed past the first two bets, winning a total of £10,000 and becoming something of a local personality in the process. In early May 2010, within a couple of weeks of beating the odds for a third time, Jon finally succumbed to his terminal disease. I was genuinely tearful when I heard. Jon had been treated at Harefield Hospital, so I arranged that the £10,000 he came so close to collecting should be donated to that establishment to buy a vital piece of equipment they required, to which a plaque bearing Jon's name was affixed in his memory.

FUTURE FORTUNES

If Londoner John W Richardson, who now lives in Las Vegas, fathers a child during the year he has specified, he will win £500,000 from the bet he struck with me, of £50 at odds of 10,000/1.

Why such generous odds for a man to become a dad? Because he will have something else to celebrate in that year, 2040: his 100th birthday!

Caesar Milego-Pertierra could collect even more than Richardson, having bet £1,000 at 1,000/1 (which will pay out £1 million) in early 1998 that he will make it to his century in 2031. "I have a secret formula which I will publish when I'm 100," the Spanish-born father of two told me when he struck the wager. "I drink a glass of port every now and then and am always optimistic about the future."

To which I responded: “You can be sure we will not come to bury Caesar.”

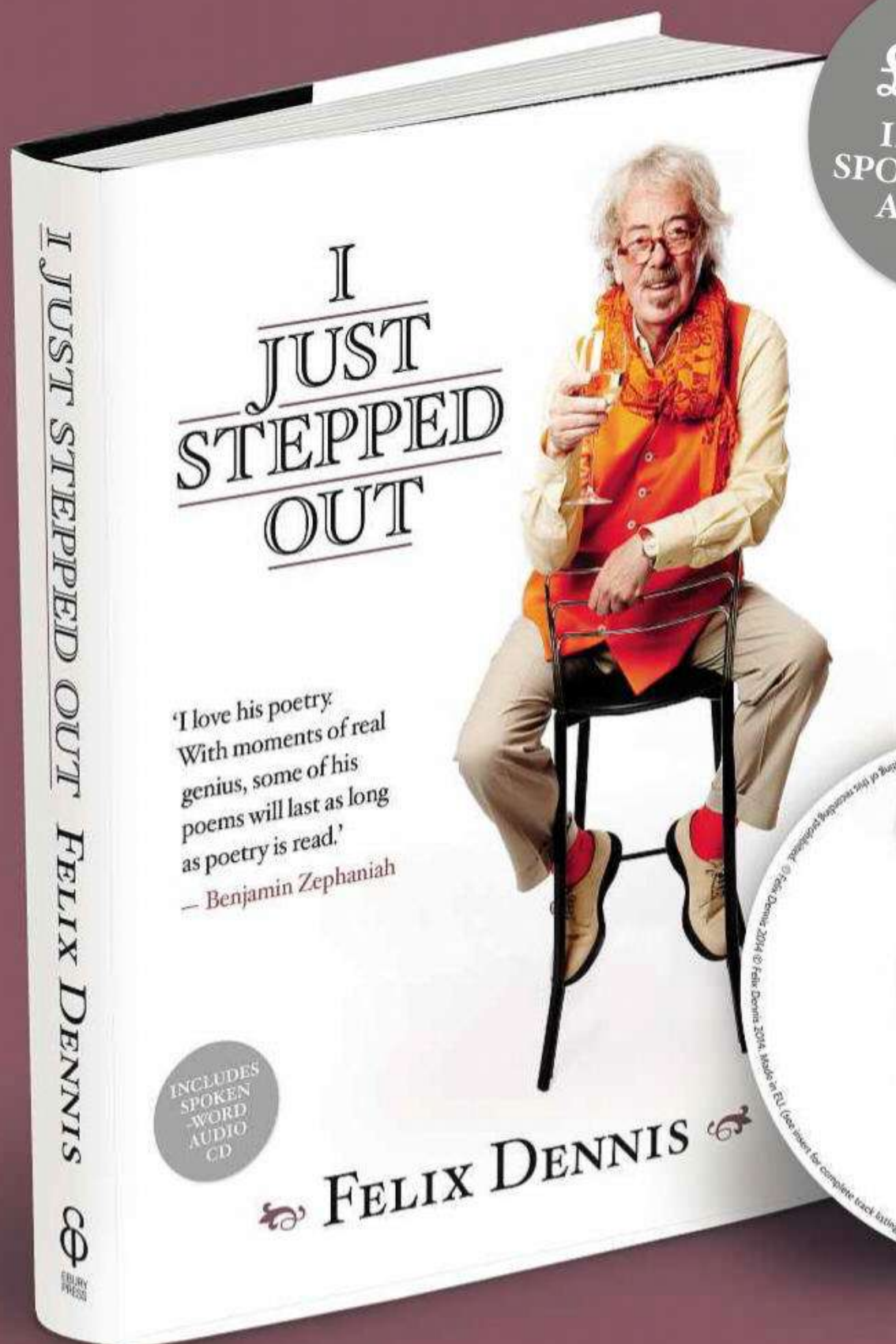
I accepted an even longer-lasting bet, which won't be won or lost until 2116, when David Christie of Glasgow might finally collect £10,000 for the £2 wager he placed with me that, during that year, the Earth will be involved in a direct collision with the comet known as 'Swift-Tuttle'.

As for my favourite weird wager over the years? I think the flurry of 500/1 bets I took that it would be proved that a famous brother and sister were actually one and the same person: not Marie and Donny Osmond, but La Toya and Michael Jackson.

I bet it crossed your mind once or twice
back in the day...

🔗 *GRAHAM SHARPE worked for William Hill for nearly 50 years. His latest book, Vinyl Countdown: A Sideways Look at Vinyl Records, Record Shops and Record Collectors, is published by Oldcastle Books in October.*

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EURO-MYTHCONCEPTIONS

As Boris Johnson finally achieves his childhood dream to become ‘World King’ (well, Britain’s new PM), **SD TUCKER** scrutinises Brexiteer BoJo’s role in the creation of the tabloid ‘Euro-Myth’ genre.

The urban myths we invent about our politicians tell us a lot about what we think of them. It’s the same with the European Union itself, and the myths we tell ourselves about that much-maligned body. Did they really ban bent bananas? No, but it’s easy to imagine this was precisely the kind of thing those interfering, faceless Eurocrats *would* do, if they ever got the chance! The straight bananas idea is like the *ur-myth* template for the whole Euro-Myth field, in that while it is *literally* untrue, in spirit it is rather accurate. There are indeed unnecessary EU regulations relating to the classification and shape of bananas, but no demand that bent ones be banned.¹ After all, have you ever bought a ruler-straight banana? No, because such strange fruit are nowhere naturally to be found, any more than square strawberries. However, to adapt that great European Voltaire’s old saying, “If straight bananas did not exist, it would be necessary to invent them”. So somebody did...

EUROPEAN WRONG CONTEST

The Euro-Myth was more-or-less coined by our new PM Boris in a former life as Brussels correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* between 1989 and 1994, under the editorship of Max Hastings. Hastings knew full well that the stories Johnson (who had previously been sacked from the *Times* for inventing a quote) filed about the EU were basically made-up, but they were funny and readers loved them, so he kept on asking for more. According to Johnson, the EU intended to officially reclassify snails as fish, ban pink sausages and prawn cocktail crisps and employ specially-trained snoopers to sniff animal-dung in order to ensure it all possessed an officially approved scent of “Euro-manure”. This created a snowball effect, as other newspapers, in particular Eurosceptic tabloids like the *Sun* and *Daily Mail*, began imitating Johnson’s example and concocting silly-season stories of their own, all year round. The basic idea was to get hold of a new piece of Brussels legislation and then wilfully stretch its meaning so that, while dull in reality, it appeared to be suggesting something totally absurd and comical. Reporters started getting ear-bashings from editors if they failed to follow Johnson’s template; and so it was that sowing lies became an obligatory part of any good Brussels correspondent’s job-description (see the ‘EU Mythconceptions’



LEFT: Boris Johnson – inventor of the Euro-Myth?

FACT AND FICTION MINGLED IN THE REALM OF THE EURO-MYTH

panel for some classic examples). Such has been Johnson’s influence that the European Commission has now created its own Snopes-style website devoted to dispelling an entire A-Z of such Euro-Myths. Resurrected versions of tall Johnsonian tales still pop up today, all across the continent; in 2010, Polish media reported that the EU did indeed now intend to reclassify snails as “inland fish”, so that French snail-farmers could gain fraudulent access to EU fishing-subsidies.²

When, in April 2019, Press regulator IPSO demanded the *Telegraph* amend online archive editions of a Johnson column containing patently false data, the newspaper tried to defend its star columnist (annual fee: £275,000 per annum, a sum he once dismissed as “chicken-feed”) by advancing the argument that the piece was “clearly comically polemical, and could not be reasonably read as a serious, empirical, in-depth analysis of hard factual matters”.³ Boris seemed proud of his unique literary invention, though, telling the BBC in 2005 that “Everything I wrote from Brussels, I found I was sort of chucking these rocks over the garden wall and I listened to this amazing crash from the greenhouse next door over in England as everything I wrote...

was having this amazing, explosive effect on the Tory party and it really gave me this, I suppose, rather weird sense of power.”⁴

In 2003, Johnson wrote an essay with the Spike Milligan-esque title *Europe: My Part in Its Downfall*, in which he boasted of how he had defeated the megalomaniac plans of Jacques Delors to, as the *Telegraph* had it in a blazing front-page headline, ‘Rule Europe’. This was in 1992, in the run-up to the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which formalised the change of the old EEC (European Economic Community) into the EU (European Union), with its Single Market in goods, capital and services, and to prepare for which all kinds of harmonisation regulations were needed. Johnson was now convinced that Delors’s project was doomed, an epiphany rammed home when he saw a Spaniard remain totally unmoved, “staring at me with an expression of real pain”, while Boris himself laughed heartily at Manuel falling over in an episode of *Fawlty Towers*. In Denmark, the people were given a vote about signing up to Maastricht. They said no (a referendum result later reversed) after, Boris said, they read his article about Delors’s plans, “photocopied it a thousandfold” and “marched the streets of Copenhagen with my story fixed to their banners”. Or so BoJo liked to imagine. In fact, he admits this was a mere “babyish” fantasy, and that his “stunning, historic and now wholly forgotten article” was merely tomorrow’s fish-and-chips wrapper.⁵

The way that fact and fiction quickly mingled within the realm of the Euro-Myth can be seen in the saga of the ‘Euro-Sausage’. This was invented for the 1984 Christmas special of the classic BBC sit-com *Yes, Minister*, in which the titular Minister, Jim Hacker, sees off a threat from Brussels to standardise sausages across the continent and re-label the British variety as an “emulsified high-fat offal tube” due to the low-quality meat-content of the average British Banger. However, in 2001 Brussels made genuine proposals to re-label sausages if they contained low-grade “mechanically recovered meat” and the story was recycled by the *Sun* as if the TV show had come true – even though it hadn’t. The thing was, in *Yes, Minister*, Jim Hacker manipulates his own media campaign against the ‘Euro-Sausage’

in such a way that, by appearing to stand up to interfering Brussels bureaucrats, that he ends up becoming PM. Did Johnson, already convinced of the EU's imminent demise by Manuel, model the most recent phase of his political career upon that of another decades-old BBC sit-com character? If so, maybe he had good reason to. In April 2019, it was reported that the EU was making actual proposals to force vegetarian burgers to be relabelled as "discs" and vegetarian sausages to be relabelled as... "tubes". Talk about ostension.⁶

During the 2016 Referendum campaign, Johnson specifically mentioned some of his old Euro-Myths, leading to accusations that the EU he was campaigning against was an imaginary *Yes, Minister*-style version of the institution he had created in his *Telegraph* columns, rather than the real thing. There is some truth to this – but not all criticism of Boris is entirely fair. When he claimed in 2016 that only 4% of EU Commission employees were British, he was loudly accused of lying ... but when this was looked into, it transpired he had *overestimated* how many were British. In fact, it was only 3.5%. Likewise, on the campaign-trail, he moaned about Brussels saying bananas could not be sold in bunches of more than three. Boris had indeed blundered... very slightly. In 2011, the EU prohibited retailers from selling most bananas in bunches of fewer than four (except as single fruits), rather than more than three. As Johnson's basic point was to illustrate how petty many Brussels regulations really are, does it matter that he said *more than three* instead of *fewer than four*? The Europhiles who accused him of lying were perhaps more deceptive here than he was.⁷

THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF BRUSSELS

To combat anti-EU lies invented by other men called Boris, in 2015 Brussels began funding a website, EUvsDisinfo.eu, aimed at countering anti-EU propaganda pumped out from Putin's Russia. This site does some good work, such as exposing a series of bizarre pseudo-documentaries with titles like *Europe Is the Kingdom of the Gays* which seek to convince Eastern European audiences that the EU has a secret plot to turn schoolchildren transgender via the influence of homosexual politicians. The EU's team also found amusing Kremlin-pushed nonsense claiming the world is actually flat and that English secret-agents must have tried to kill the Skripals because Shakespeare's plays are filled with poisonings.

However, there is a certain genre of Euro-Myth not busted on any EU website, because they happen to actually be true. For example, Brussels really does waste



money on producing 'free' (to the consumer, not the taxpayer) EU-themed colouring books for schoolchildren – kids need plenty of grey pencils handy to colour in all those faceless bureaucrats. This was revealed by the *Daily Telegraph* in 2013 when it found a multi-language publication, *Mr and Mrs MEP and Their Helpers*, of which 15,000 copies had been printed at your expense, with pics of Eurocrats' free limousines to colour in. The glossy booklet, intended for use in a 'Kids' Corner' during EU parliament open-days, was waved around by then-PM David Cameron as a prime example of EU waste; but, such was the *Telegraph's* reputation, some EU leaders like Angela Merkel refused to accept that the booklet was real, thinking it merely a Boris-aping parody. But it wasn't. And, when asked how much it had cost to produce, officials refused point-blank to release any figures.⁸ But still the EU did not learn. As an alternative to Panini football-sticker albums, in 2014 they produced an EU Farming Policies sticker-book, so kids could collect images of vegetables, grain silos and other things relating to the exciting, child-friendly world of the Common Agricultural Policy.⁹

The reasoning given by rampant Federasts for targeting helpless Euro-infants in this way is that "it is strategically wise to go where the resistance is least" to such propaganda, as revealed in a rather creepy document, *Reflection on Information and Communication Policy of the European Union*, whose existence was revealed by Boris Johnson in the *Telegraph* of 1 April 1993 – but this was no April Fool's joke. Following continent-wide disquiet over the Maastricht Treaty, Jacques Delors commissioned mega-brained Belgian MEP Willy de Clercq to head a *Comité des Sages*, or Committee of Wise Men, to fight back against scepticism about "the worthiness of the good project". These Elders of Brussels plotted to create an EU-wide Office of Communications, devising

LEFT: The bendy banana remains a key signifier of the Euro-Myth, as these anti-Brexit protesters demonstrate.

new methods to market Europe as a "brand". They proposed that the text of treaties like Maastricht be downplayed as "far too technical and remote from daily life" for ordinary Euro-plebs to understand. Instead, the EU should "invest in programme-units" and encourage soap-operas to insert pro-EU storylines, so that the brain-dead populace would subliminally imbibe how wonderful the EU is simply by seeing Phil Mitchell praise the Schengen Zone. Children and women, having weak minds, should be particularly targeted, the report implied. "This will probably be the first time in European history that a statesman makes a direct appeal to women," the document laughably stated, while citizens should be encouraged to think of the "nurturing" Europa as their loving mother, with the EU being "instinctively opposed to wars and aggression", just as all females are. The "mystical connotations" of the approaching year 1999 should be drawn into all this too, in a rolling media-programme that "must be total and continuous". It was "a well-documented fact" that "most people derive their 'knowledge' of complex subjects" from viewing TV, wrote De Clercq – do note those inverted commas – so this policy of counter-Borising was bound to work. Watching doctored shows would "tell [voters] all they need, or have patience, to know."

In schools, history books should be rewritten to "ensure a European dimension is given to our past", and newspapers massaged to provide "a more positive line" about the EU, by "establishing systematic bridges with the national and regional Press". Crucially, "Newscasters and reporters must *themselves* be targeted, they must themselves be persuaded about the EU. It is crucial to change their opinions first, so that *they* subsequently become enthusiastic supporters of the cause... The media must be persuaded to present the achievements, the benefits, the opportunities [of the EU] in a positive, optimistic way, and not delight in criticism and failure." Willy also bemusingly suggested targeting bicycle clubs for pro-EU brainwashing with his not-at-all Soviet slogan "EUROPEAN UNION TOGETHER TO PROMOTE PROGRESS & PROSPERITY, PROTECTION & PEACE: TOGETHER FOR EUROPE TO THE BENEFIT OF US ALL!" The media should be "willing" to give discount advertising-rates to such "campaigns that are so obviously in the public interest"; campaigns which imparted vital data such as "Who is the EU's chess champion?" These suggestions led to a temporary walkout of outraged Brussels hacks, who accused the EU of "acting like a military junta". But resistance was futile.

CHRISTOPHER FURLONG / GETTY IMAGES



EU MYTHCONCEPTIONS: THE GAME SHOW

Another result of Willy De Clercq's Svengali-like scheme to "introduce the European dimension into fiction, games and shows", was that the EU began part-funding the god-awful 1990s daytime TV game-show *Going for Gold*, presented by the oleaginous Henry Kelly, in which contestants drawn from across Europe competed to answer general-knowledge questions in the studio, thereby fostering a sense of pan-European consensus – the consensus being that the show was a total waste of public money. And yet, one simple change in format would have made the programme watchable. Instead of a general-knowledge quiz, why not a True or False game in which Pierre from Paris and Bertha from Berlin battled to guess the veracity of various of Euro-Myths, in a total rip-off of Mat Coward's long-running *FT* 'Mythconceptions' column? Play along yourself: can you guess which of these 12 apparent Euro-Myths, corresponding to the 12 gold stars of the EU flag, are real and which were simply invented by journalistic clones of Boris?

1. EUROPE GOES NUTS

In 2006, it was reported that the EU planned to force Brits to call bags of 'Bombay Mix' 'Mumbai Mix', in order to "make the snack politically correct" and avoid offending sensitive anti-colonialist nut-fans living on the subcontinent. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: Whilst printed in the *Sun*, the story was eventually tracked back to an employee of an obscure British News Agency, which admitted it came from "a mate" who had once "heard it being talked about" at the Home Office, before pleading that "this is just meant to be funny for the tabloids". Amazingly, this particular story was debunked by the *Daily Telegraph*.

2. TOY NON-STORY

In 1994, Brussels planned to implement ridiculous rules banning imports of all "non-human" toys from China into the EU, meaning that plastic figures of *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk would be allowed in but not pointy-eared Vulcan Mr Spock, creating interesting debates amongst

Customs Officers about whether Noddy and Big-Ears, as possible elves and gnomes, should be allowed free access to the continent or turned back at the ports, as Matteo Salvini would desire. **TRUE or FALSE?**

TECHNICALLY FALSE: The potential EU quota system for toy imports proposed in 1994 did indeed seek to draw a distinction between human dolls and non-human ones, but this was actually based upon adhering to standard customs regulations drawn up by another global body in 1950, not the EU; Mr Spock would not be denied entry as an undesirable Chinese alien as such. Nonetheless, if the EU had wished to strike such distinctions from their own legal corpus, they could presumably have done so.

3. FISHERS OF MEN

The EU introduced regulations in 1992 forcing all fishing vessels to carry "a minimum" of 200 condoms on-board, apparently just in case fishermen decided to fend off boredom by having a gay orgy on the high seas. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: From 1 January 1995, it became compulsory under EU law for all such vessels to carry medical kits in case of an emergency at sea – you could include condoms within it if you liked, I suppose, but it would probably be better to bring along medicine, bandages, defibrillators, TCP and pain-killers. The EU was promoting an anti-AIDS safe-sex campaign at the time, and the two issues were deliberately conflated for satirical purposes.

4. JUST USE A BENT BANANA

Under the EU's 2004 Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directives, it was made compulsory for embarrassed women to hand back their old vibrators to licensed sex-shop operators for recycling before they would be allowed to buy any new ones. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: Women (or men) were under no legal compulsion to

hand over their old sex-toys for recycling; but vendors of such items were obliged to don a pair of protective rubber-gloves and accept them back to be recycled free of charge should any "final owners of such goods" turn up brandishing a motorised dildo at them.

5. EU SMELL!

In 1996, the EU decided to fund research into the smell of workers in different member-states, in order to create a new olfactory measurement called an 'olf', which would represent the kind of odour emitted by a "standard European person". **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: Between 1992 and 1995, the UK Building Research Establishment teamed up with the European Commission to perform studies into indoor air-pollution in workplaces which did involve the issue of offensive smells, but no attempt was made to define just how badly all foreigners reek of garlic, herrings or cheese.

6. JOURNALISTIC SAUCES

In 2002, a "spectacularly obscure" EU committee met to consider rules which determined that if any savoury sauce contains more than 20% lumps, it must immediately be reclassified as "a vegetable in disguise" and thus become subject to Single Market import and export tariffs of up to 288%. **TRUE or FALSE?**

TRUE: The Nomenclature Sub-Group of the Customs Code Committee did indeed meet in 2002 to decide whether or not to keep this regulation, or to raise the threshold at which sauce magically becomes a vegetable within Europe's borders to 30%.

Sauce manufacturers, eager to avoid such tariffs, and aware many customers liked "texturally interesting" lumpy sauces, hired a lobbying firm to present the EU's meeting to the Press as another 'Brussels gone mad!' tale, hoping to persuade bureaucrats to raise the limit or abolish it altogether under public pressure. An EU spokesman disingenuously tried

to discredit the whole story based on one tiny, trivial inaccuracy in a *Times* editorial, but it was actually all quite true.

7. NOT A CRUST TO SPARE

A 1995 EU Directive stipulated that if you wanted to throw bread to swans, ducks or homeless people, both those giving and those receiving the charitable donation had to buy a special licence costing £2,000; something which is beyond the financial range of most water-fowl, and indeed most mendicants. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: The EU did pass environmental laws governing the responsible disposal of waste, but under the key European principle of subsidiarity it was up to individual EU nations to devise and implement the specifics.

8. WATERLOO SUNSET

To avoid offending the French, in 2003 it was proposed that Britain should rename Trafalgar Square and Waterloo Station with something less Francophobic. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: This was intended as a joke, made by a single individual, not an actual proposal made by the EU.

9. YET MORE CABBAGES

While the Ten Commandments (at least one of which her brother has so singularly failed to obey down the years) are only 79 words in total, said Boris's sister Rachel Johnson in March 2016, EU regulations on the sale of cabbages run to 26,911 words. **TRUE or FALSE?**

TECHNICALLY FALSE: Regular readers of MythConceptions will know this is a standard myth about overly verbose governmental regulations everywhere. EU cabbage laws in fact run to 'only' 1,800 words... which is still 1,700 words more than God used to summarise an entire moral code on Moses's easily-ignored tablets.

10. SOILED SHEETS

Under 2014 EU environmental regulations, cows were banned from defecating on hillsides due to the large amount of nitrates



their dung contains, forcing farmers to fit their cattle with giant nappies. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: The EU's 1991 Nitrates Directive requires member states to regulate the amount of nitrates running off land into water-sources, but the idea that cows must perforce be fitted with giant nappies was invented by an Alan Abel-like German farmer who did indeed wrap bedsheets around his animals' anuses and then call out the Press, but as part of a lobbying campaign against arguably overly-intrusive *domestic* nitrates regulation devised by the Bavarian Farm Union.



11. BREAST IS BEST

In 2005, the EU declared it was a "health hazard" for barmaids to show too much cleavage, and ordered them to cover up in case they got skin-cancer. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: The EU regulations in question simply required employers to take into account the risk of skin-cancer to employees who work outside with skin showing all day long, like construction-workers, and take action accordingly. The reference to barmaids' breasts was just a deliberately daft tabloid extrapolation.

12. GOING FOR GOLD

In 2019, *FT* reported that old TV game show *Going for Gold* was part-funded by the EU as part of a pro-European propaganda campaign. **TRUE or FALSE?**

FALSE: *Going for Gold* was not in receipt of any EU cash whatsoever; it was a format invented by Grundy TV in Australia and sold on to BBC1, where it began being broadcast in 1987, five years prior to Willy De Clercq's report even being published – my very own Euro-Myth. See how easy it is to put these things out there?

Clearly, most Euro-Myths are just that – myths. But not *all* of them. For example, the EU's myth-busting website (from which many of the above

tales are drawn) contains an entry dated July 1993, clearly created in the aftermath of the stink caused by Boris's revelations about Willy De Clercq's call for pan-European manipulation of the media, playing down speculation that "The EC has authorised a 120-episode Euro soap-opera, as well as a Euro news channel, with the aim of promoting the European ideal" something which, the site correctly pointed out, was untrue – in narrow terms. Yet the EU, following De Clercq's scheme, clearly *did* set out to manipulate the media with the aim of "promoting the European ideal" via other means than a Strasbourg-set version of *Coronation Street*.

Consider a ridiculous 2014 children's story-book, aimed at schools and published under the auspices of the European Commission, entitled *The Mystery of the Golden Stars: An Adventure in the European Union*, which must feature the least appealing back-cover blurb ever: "*Hello, and welcome to Brussels, capital of Belgium! This book invites you to tour Brussels, discovering what the European Union is, how it works and how it may be relevant to you... Good luck and lots of fun!*" The story concerns a group of kids who try to imitate their hero, Belgian boy-detective Tintin, by wandering around his creator Hergé's home-city and solving the exciting mystery of just what the Treaty of Rome ever did for us. Finding obscure references to the Schuman Declaration and Ted Heath hidden within things like an antique teddy bear, the kids are pursued by an evil woman with a golden claw and "something pitiless about her eyes, like a reptilian predator" before at the end of every chapter they e-mail back home to the class of captive real-life British schoolchildren being forced to read this drivel, asking them to solve a 'fun', EU-related puzzle. Chased by the lizard-lady, the kids take temporary refuge within the sheltering hemicycle of the EU Parliament Building, where they exchange thrilling

dialogue like this: "*Where can I buy a bottle of water? I'm parched,*" said Ricki. "*Can't you just get some tap water?*" asked Maddy, irritably. "*But I was told you can't drink from the taps on the continent,*" replied Ricki. "*Wow, you are behind the times,*" scolded Maddy. "*It's perfectly safe because of the strict laws they made right here in the European Parliament.*" This is a heavy-handed cue for the teacher to explain the precise nature of EU water-filtration to his or her pupils, even the fascinating factoid that "drinking water quality is reported to the European Commission in three-year cycles." To appeal to children's natural interests, they should also be informed of the legal specifics of EU toy-safety standards and the official 'CE' safety kite-mark. It is important they know how such landmark EU-inspired legislation as the UK's Toy (Safety) Regulations Act (1995) represent subsidiary member-state transpositions of original EU-wide directives into the corpus of national law, thus meaning that, when any specific toy is found to be unsafe, all member-states are quickly and efficiently "notified by means of the RAPEX alert system". Via scrutiny of such wise measures, the Tintin-loving kids manage to uncover clues which, if deciphered correctly, will "lead us to the centre of the EU" – a large roundabout in central Brussels, where they uncover a missing golden crown and are rewarded for their efforts with a celebratory speech from the President of the European Commission. As Boris Johnson's *Daily Mail* rival Richard Littlejohn is so fond of saying: "You couldn't make it up!" And, in this instance, there was no need to.

SOURCES: <https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/euomyths-a-z-index/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/23/10-best-euro-myths-from-custard-creams-to-condoms>; http://irepntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/18880/1/192263_643%20Cross%20Prepublisher.pdf; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jan/11/worlddispatch.andrewosborn>; <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication/>

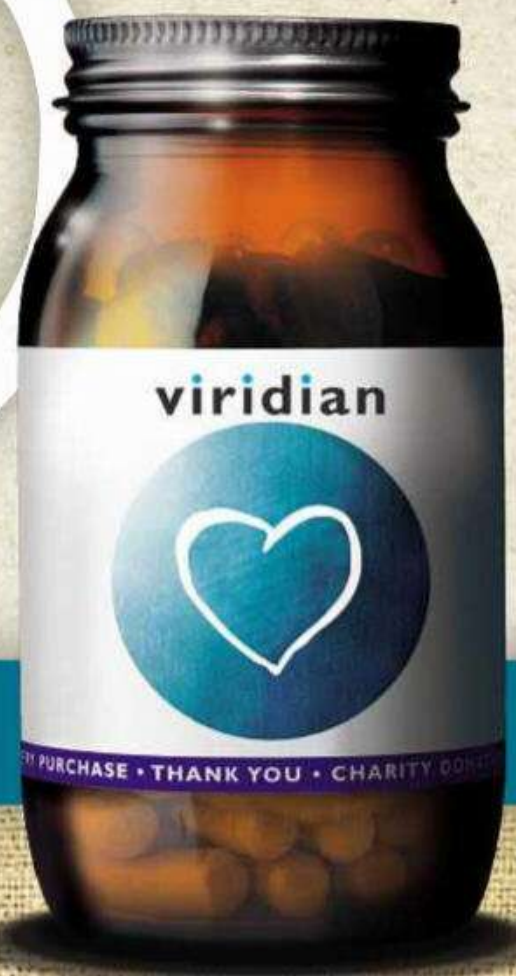
The EU was already in the business of giving friendly reporters lucrative freelance work for in-house magazines and newspapers that nobody ever read, or commissioning them to perform meaningless 'research' tasks on the side, which could double or even triple their salaries – with all expenses paid, naturally, as they always are in Euro-land.¹⁰ Is this blatant corruption of the journalistic process not just as bad as what Johnson did with his own intentionally misleading anti-EU articles in the *Telegraph*? Arguably it is worse. At least Boris's lies were sometimes funny. As Sir Henry Wotton once said, "An ambassador is an honest man sent abroad to lie for his country" – and there's many a true word spoken in jest.

NOTES

- 1 I won't bore you with the specific details of Commission Regulation 2257/94 and its successors, 1333/2011 and 565/2013; full details are at <https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/bananas-and-brussels/>; www.europarl.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/en/media/euomyths/bendybananas.html; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euomyth>
- 2 www.crikey.com.au/2016/06/20/boris-johnson-started-eu-bashing-before-it-was-cool/; www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/15/brexit-boris-johnson-euomyths-telegraph-brussels; www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/07/boris-johnson-peddled-absurd-eu-myths-and-our-disgraceful-press-followed-his; www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2016/07/20/boris-goes-back-to-brussels; www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/26/boris-johnson-latest-euro-myth-brexit; www.rferl.org/a/In_France_Snails_Are_Now_Fish/1962107.html
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- 7 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/17/boris-johnson-accused-of-making-it-up-as-he-goes-along-after-cla/; www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-35959948; Boris also mistakenly said that, thanks to the EU, you now "can't recycle a teabag". Indeed you cannot recycle a teabag, the BBC Fact-Checking Team pointed out online, but only in the same sense that you cannot recycle a bomb; whatever its faults, the EU should not be blamed for the laws of entropy.
- 8 www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/10148268/Mr-and-Mrs-MEP-colouring-book-becomes-surprise-hit-of-EU-summit.html; If you visit this website, you can print out full-page reproductions of the booklet for your own children to colour in.
- 9 *Sunday Times*, 9 Mar 2014; I couldn't find any images of this alleged sticker-book online anywhere, though, so hopefully I haven't just fallen for yet another Euro-Myth myself here ...
- 10 Booker & North, 2016, pp.374-375; http://aei.pitt.edu/29870/1/DE_CLERCQ_REPORT_INFO_COMM._POLICY.pdf

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The Flypaper Murder

ROB GANDY investigates a famous Liverpool crime.

When you step out of Liverpool's Lime Street station you are greeted by the sight of the majestic, Parthenon-like St George's Hall. Opened in 1854, it was built to accommodate the local triennial music festivals, meetings, dinners and concerts. At either end were the city's main law courts; one for criminal cases and one for civil cases. They have not been used for these purposes since the opening of the Queen Elizabeth II Law Courts in 1984, although they host film and television courtroom dramas, often doubling for the Old Bailey.

Arguably the most famous case tried in St George's Hall was that of Florence Maybrick in 1889, who was accused of murdering her husband, James Maybrick – with flypaper. Florence Chandler was a 17-year-old American when she met cotton-broker Maybrick, 23 years her senior, in 1880; they married the following year. Subsequently, Maybrick had a mistress in London, where he frequently travelled on business, and the deterioration of their relationship accelerated when Florence met another man in Liverpool; upon discovering her relationship, Maybrick assaulted her and announced his intention to seek divorce.

Florence was accused of purchasing 12 dozen flypapers, soaking them to obtain arsenic from them, and then poisoning Maybrick. His health had deteriorated rapidly before his death and the post-mortem detected the presence of arsenic in his system. Florence denied murder, claiming that she had extracted the arsenic for her complexion. Before modern-day readers think that this is a totally bonkers defence it should be pointed out that in the 19th



ABOVE: Florence Maybrick and her alleged victim, her husband James Maybrick.

century flypaper was not sticky, but was soaked in water with a little sugar added to attract flies.¹ Also, toxins were regularly prescribed in small doses for medicinal and cosmetic purposes, partly because they were thought to be invigorating. Opiates were not illegal. In 1883, a senior doctor said that "if a law were passed, compelling physicians to confine themselves to two remedies only in their entire practice, arsenic would be my choice for one, opium for the other".²

James Maybrick's health was not good. He had always been a hypochondriac, and increasingly self-medicated with an array of patent medicines; many of his preferred tonics contained strychnine, belladonna, phosphoric acid or arsenic, and he purchased the latter on a regular basis.³ Doctors prescribed further quantities of poison, such as a supposed digestive aid containing prussic acid (hydrogen cyanide). Therefore, it was perhaps unsurprising that these substances took their toll on him and that when he died, in the spring of 1889, arsenic was found in his system. The cause of death was unclear, but when a nursemaid surreptitiously opened one of Florence's letters to her lover, the family and some domestic staff suspected a motive for murder.

Florence stood trial in July

1889 under Judge James Fitzjames Stephen, an arrogant man who was starting to show signs of the mental illness that would soon end his career. Despite a strong defence – arguing that the confusing and contradictory medical evidence made it clear that the low levels of arsenic found in Maybrick's body could not be confidently demonstrated to have caused his death – Stephen gave a summing-up bitterly hostile to Florence. This focused upon her infidelity rather than whether or not she had killed her husband. The jury of local businessmen was not persuaded by the defence's rational arguments, and found Florence guilty. She was sentenced to hang.

There was a public outcry at the perceived miscarriage of justice and the Home Office was petitioned, resulting in the death sentence being commuted to life imprisonment; Florence was finally released in January 1904, having spent 14 years in custody. Always protesting her innocence, she returned to America where she wrote her life story. She died in 1941, a destitute recluse with only her cats for company.

Ripperologists will have taken note of the names of some of the above players. Justice Stephen was the father of James Kenneth Stephen, poet and tutor to Prince Albert Victor, eldest son of Albert Edward, Prince of Wales – one

of the many Jack the Ripper suspects. Allegedly, he committed the murders "out of a twisted desire for revenge" because of the break-up of his homosexual relationship with Prince Eddy,⁴ and his psychological profile apparently matched that of the Ripper.⁵

Of course, the murder victim himself – James Maybrick – is one of the biggest suspects. It was his diary, which surfaced in 1992, which has led to claims that he was Jack the Ripper [FT76:61; FT77:11]. The diary's author was anonymous, but there were enough hints and references consistent with Maybrick's established life and habits to suggest that he was Jack. Whether or not the diaries were forgeries is still debated.⁶ Interestingly, the Whitechapel murders took place from late August to early November 1888, and it was in early 1889 that Maybrick took seriously ill; there were no further Ripper murders after his death.

Irrespective of the merits of the cases against Stephen and Maybrick, it is notable that the Flypaper Murder trial involved the father of one Jack The Ripper suspect as the judge and another suspect as the victim.

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The man who kept Spain awake

MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO celebrates the career of a much-loved director who brought Gothic film and television to Franco's Spain.

On the evening of Friday, 4 February 1966, television screens in Spain went dark for a second. A flash of lightning revealed a set unusual in Franco's era: a Gothic window, a cobwebbed shelf with a skull serving as a bookend. A soft masculine voice pronounced the names embossed on the book spines: "Maupassant, Gaston Leroux, Henry James, Edgar Allan Poe, Stevenson. They all wrote immortal tales. Stories where horror, madness, and fear intertwine. Stories that often robbed of sleep those who read them." It was the beginning of *Historias Para No Dormir*, or "Stories to Keep You Awake", the wildly popular series that ran for just three seasons but defined the horror genre in Spain. Its creator and director, Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, affectionately known as 'Chicho', passed away aged 83 this June, four months after having received an honorary Goya Award for lifetime achievement from the Spanish Film Academy. At the ceremony, an internationally successful new generation of Spanish horror film makers (Alejandro Amenábar, Juan Antonio Bayona, Rodrigo Cortés, and Álex de la Iglesia, among others) paid tribute to a man whose work was adored by the masses but whose influence is often understated.

Ibáñez Serrador was born in Uruguay in 1935, the only child of an actor couple. After his parents split up, he stayed in South America with his mother, who was often touring. He was a sickly boy who enjoyed reading horror



ABOVE: Reinventing the Gothic for Spanish TV in *Historias Para No Dormir*. BELOW: Ibáñez Serrador's first feature.

classics, but he'd also been bitten by the acting bug, and when he and his mother moved to Spain in 1947 he appeared in several stage plays. He cut his directing teeth in Argentina, where he helmed *Obras Maestras del Terror* (1959), a TV adaptation of short stories by Poe – whom he called his god – Robert Louis Stevenson, and Ray Bradbury.

In Franco's Spain, however, horror (of the fictional kind) was a rarity. It had seldom been shown on screen: aside from Jess Franco's *The Awful Dr Orloff* (1961), there were traces of it in the silent films of Segundo de Chomón and in Edgar Neville's Expressionist mystery *La Torre de los Siete Jorobados* (1943). When Chicho returned to Spain in 1963, he knew he had to use a different calling card. Sci-fi was an internationally popular genre, so he showed the executive directors of TVE an episode of *Mañana Puede Ser Verdad*, the sci-fi anthology series he'd co-directed with his father, Narciso Ibáñez Menta, in Argentina. They agreed to broadcast it. Since



the response from the audience was positive, he was offered the chance to direct a Spanish version of the series.

Historias Para No Dormir came later, capitalising on the success of this first series. It was conceived as an anthology of horror and suspense, with adaptations of classic stories (*La Pata* was based on WW Jacobs's "The Monkey's Paw", *El Pacto* on Poe's "The Facts in The Case of M. Valdemar") along with

new stories written by Ibáñez Serrador himself under the alias of Luis Peñafiel. In the manner of Alfred Hitchcock, he introduced each episode, using a different tone for each tale, often employing black humour. In his first introduction he revealed his intentions to the audience: here, he said, they wouldn't find "suspicious-looking butlers", "old manor houses", or thunder and lightning. He made it very clear: he wanted to strip the genre of its conventions – and so he did.

The first episode, *El Cumpleaños*, was based on "Nightmare in yellow", a short story by American mystery writer Fredric Brown. As jazz music played in the background, two diamonds branded the top right corner of the screen – the infamous "dos rombos" qualification, the censor's warning that the content was only suitable for over-18s. Indeed, Ibáñez Serrador intended to shock the spectators: the use of internal monologue forced them to identify with the main character, a man with a pencil



moustache who would have looked at ease in Franco's cabinet, but who, on his 50th birthday, plans on murdering his wife and robbing the bank where he works.

Many of the episodes starred Chicho's own father, the wiry, charismatic Narciso Ibáñez Menta, blessed with dark, soulful eyes and an unforgettable booming voice. *El Asfalto*, based on a short story by Carlos Buiza, was one of those. Its climax, where the protagonist is swallowed by the tarmac after all the other characters ignore his pleas for help, sticks in the mind. Its themes – social isolation, the loneliness of the individual in an increasingly fragmented environment – resonated, and it received the Golden Nymph Award at the Festival of Montecarlo in 1967, putting Spain on the map as a producer of quality television content. The TV executives were elated.

1968 would turn out to be a landmark in Spanish horror, due to the unexpected success of *La Marca del Hombre Lobo* (aka *Hell's Creatures*), the unlikely monster film that almost starred Lon Chaney, Jr., but that instead launched the career of Paul Naschy (see FT259:54-55) as the Spanish "Man of the Thousand Faces".

Suddenly, the long-neglected genre was seen as profitable, and able to make inroads into the international market. By then, Ibáñez Serrador's persona had become synonymous with horror, so who better than him to deliver the next commercial success? *La Residencia*, known in English as *The House That Screamed*, was his first film and remained his personal favourite, a lavishly Gothic slasher set in a girls' boarding school in 19th century France. Shot entirely in English, with an international cast fronted by the German Lilli Palmer, it was the most expensive Spanish film ever made at the time, and the highest-grossing film of 1969 in its country of origin.

Even though censorship policies had relaxed over time, Ibáñez Serrador still had to comply with the code. The



ABOVE: Ibáñez Serrador attends a dinner at the Goya Cinema Awards at the Royal Theatre, Madrid, on 14 January 2019. BELOW: Chicho's masterpiece.

Sinister children take over an idyllic village on a Spanish island

censors were more worried about obvious displays of flesh than with any questionable content that was merely hinted at, so he delivered a piece brimming with psychosexual tension: repressed lesbianism, sadomasochism, incest. The film is by no means standard Gothic fare: the embroidery sequence is a fine example of his directing skills, and the oddly melancholic murder scenes made history, since slow-motion had never been used in Spanish cinema to depict such an act of violence. The censors labelled the film with a '4', the certification reserved for "seriously dangerous" films. Months after its release, people were queueing outside cinemas to see it.



Almost a decade later, he completed his masterpiece, the bleak cult classic *Who Can Kill a Child?* (1976). Long before *Children of The Corn*, Ibáñez Serrador presented a crowd of sinister children who take over the streets of an idyllic village in an island off the coast of Spain. The first part of the film, where an unsuspecting British couple, a loving husband and a pregnant wife, arrive at the sunny holiday resort and encounter a slightly off-kilter scenario that soon

descends into a maelstrom of violence, is almost unbearably tense. The unthinkable moral dilemma of the title delivers a punch to the gut whose effects linger long after viewing.

Both of his feature films – he only directed these two – left a clear mark in Spanish cinema, but they were only part of Chicho's legacy. In 1981 he was in front of the camera again, this time for *Mis Terrores Favoritos*, where he introduced his favourite horror films: classics such as *The Innocents* and *Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?* along with more recent productions like *Horror Express*, *Let Sleeping Corpses Die*, or *10 Rillington Place*. At a time when films weren't easily available, he educated a whole generation in cinematic scares.

Aside from the horror genre, his biggest hit was probably the game show *Un, Dos, Tres*, which premiered in 1972 and was exported to several other countries; its British version was *3-2-1*, shown on ITV between 1978 and 1988. But, even though he produced many family-friendly entertainment programmes, his public image remained associated with the horror genre until his death.

Historias Para No Dormir was revived in 2005 as *Películas Para No Dormir*, or "Films to Keep You Awake". For this new series of TV movies, Ibáñez Serrador recruited Jaume Balagueró, Alex de la Iglesia, and several other acclaimed genre directors. He even directed one of the films himself: *La Culpa*, his last directing credit. But the revival didn't sit well with audiences. Recently, *El País* asked him why *Historias Para No Dormir* resonated in Franco's Spain. "Maybe because the fear that the film instilled in you was larger than the one you felt in your everyday life," he replied. "Fear on screen is always a refuge. Feeling that there are worse things is a comfort."

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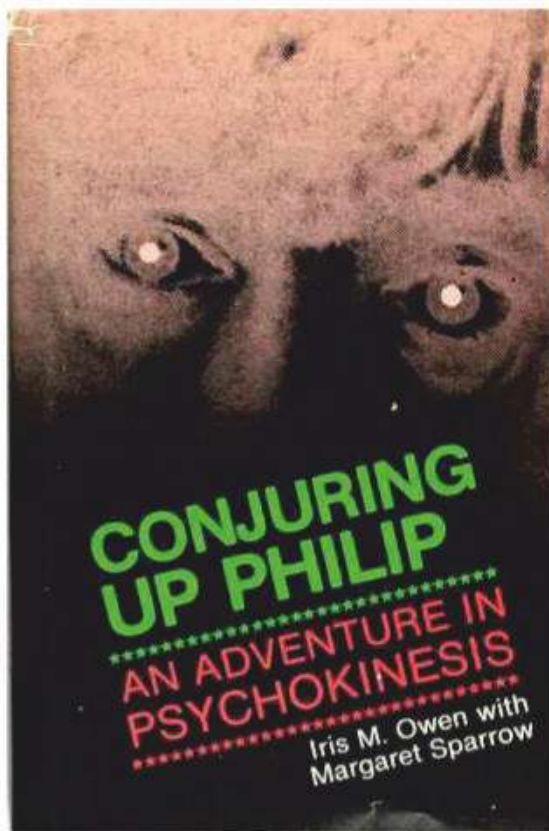
NO 48. THE GHOST STORY WITH NO GHOST

"What is a ghost?" muses aged Rosa Diamond in Salman Rushdie's (in)famous novel, *The Satanic Verses*. Rosa answers her own question: "Unfinished business, is what." Which is as neat a definition of something so elusive and enigmatic as one could wish for. But it raises the ever-unanswered question: what starts off the 'business' in the first place? In the mid-1970s, members of the Toronto Society for Psychical Research began to wonder just how 'ghostly' the spirits really were that mediums contacted in the classic *séance* room routine. Discounting known hoaxes and frauds, the group thought it possible that genuine *séance* phenomena might be the product of psychokinesis (PK), generated by a medium or perhaps collectively, rather than by discarnate spirits. So, they decided to test the idea: and proceeded to invent a plausible historical character from scratch, then to invoke his presence, and see what happened. This is the story of 'Philip', the ghost who never had an earthly life, and what happened to him and those who raised him.

It's worth stressing that those involved – a core of eight people from the Toronto SPR – had a perfect faith in the reality of PK, and took at face value the claims of the likes of Uri Geller, Prof John Hasted and his metal-bending children, and 'Nelya Mikhailova', *alias* Nina Kulagina. Such trust in such names might be rather hard to find among psychical researchers today. As we'll see, however, this outlook was crucial to the success of the Philip enterprise. Another critical aspect of the experiment was the belief that ordinary folk, not just gifted mediums, might have PK powers. The question then was: if such powers were latent in everyone, could people be trained or otherwise encouraged to manifest them? The experiment was thus two-pronged: to bring out PK using people with no known psychic talent, and to use the invented Philip as the agency thereof. In effect, Philip became his own medium.

Who was Philip? Initially, his biography was outlined by Margaret 'Sue' Sparrow: "Philip was an aristocratic Englishman living in the middle 1600s at the time of Oliver Cromwell. He had been a supporter of the king and was a Catholic. He was married to a beautiful but cold and frigid wife, Dorothea, the daughter of a neighbouring nobleman. One day, when out riding on the boundaries of his estates, Philip came across a gypsy encampment and saw there a beautiful dark-eyed, raven-haired gypsy girl, Margo, and fell instantly in love with her.

"He brought her back to live in the gatehouse near the stables of Diddington Manor – his family home. For some time



he kept his love nest secret, but eventually Dorothea, realising he was keeping someone else there, found Margo, and accused her of witchcraft and of stealing her husband. Philip was too scared of losing his reputation and his possessions to protest at the trial of Margo, and she was convicted of witchcraft and burned at the stake. Philip subsequently was stricken with remorse that he had not tried to defend Margo and used to pace the battlements of Diddington in despair. Finally one morning his body was found at the foot of the battlements where he had cast himself in a fit of agony and remorse."

With this as a framework, the group then discussed and established further details: precisely what he looked like, his taste in food and clothes, his habits and hobbies, temperament, likes and dislikes, and his feelings toward the two women in his life. One member of the group drew his portrait, and this was always put in the middle of the circle in which they sat when conjuring him up. The group also "read books relating to Philip's times, found records and songs of the period, and generally familiarised themselves with the sort of environment in which he would have lived." As time went by, this became much more elaborate. The full story of Philip, as it was eventually developed by the group and, indeed, by Philip himself, occupies an 11-page chapter at the end of the book. Philip's and Dorothea's family seats were based on real places – Diddington Hall (which lacks both a tower and battlements) and Packington Hall in Warwickshire. The reasoning was: "We chose real places... specifically because we can then prove that *historically* Philip did not exist." One supposes it's not unusual for *séance* entities to be fairly posh. What's not explained is why the group chose to invent a 17th-century English aristocrat rather than a distinguished 19th-century Canadian, whose background (or what to avoid in it) might have been easier to research.

Who comprised the group? Besides Iris Owen (the main author of *Conjuring Philip*, formerly a nurse in England; when the book was written she was serving on the board of a home for unwed mothers) there were Margaret 'Sue' Sparrow (contributing author, chairman of MENSAs Canada, and formerly a nurse with the Canadian armed forces), Andy H (housewife, and the creator of Philip's portrait), Lorne H (an industrial designer, Andy H's husband), Al P (a heating engineer), Bernice M (an accountant), Dorothy O'D (a housewife, Cub Scout leader and book-keeper), and Sidney K (a sociology student). From time to time Dr ARG 'George' Owen (a mathematician, founder of the Toronto SPR, and Iris Owen's husband) and psychologist Joel Whitton attended as observers.

Their initial intention was to produce a visible apparition of their fictional

character. They went about this by meeting twice a week or so, sitting in a circle and meditating for a period – periods that became longer as they grew accustomed to the technique. Then, during a break, they would discuss their experiences of meditation, and refine details of Philip’s life and those of the other characters in it. Finally came another session of meditation and further discussion afterwards. All this was done in full light, or using an array of coloured lights, never in darkness; and someone would always be sitting outside the circle as an observer. Owen notes that after a while “some were unconsciously claiming [Philip] for their own, stating that during meditation Philip said this or that to them, or that they had ‘seen’ him in a particular and special circumstance.” They were firmly reminded that this was a *group* endeavour, and “if he appeared, he must appear in the same way and to everyone at once... The whole object of our experiment was to prove that no such person [as a medium] was necessary. Our objective was to be able to prove that it was something any group of ordinary people could do.” On occasion, observers would see “a certain mistiness” around the circle, but there was little else, and after a year of concentrated effort the group was feeling despondent: “Nothing of any real value had been obtained... it seemed pointless to continue.”

As it turned out, one very valuable thing had been achieved: an excellent rapport among the members, a “close bond of affection and friendship”. And at about the time they were pondering what to do next, Iris Owen came across the work of Colin Brookes-Smith, DW Hunt and Kenneth Batchelor published in the 1960s. This suggested that PK phenomena could be produced by anyone in the right frame of mind, namely a state of combined relaxation and expectancy. Acquiring this they regarded as a psychological skill, a key aspect of which was belief – or faith – with no room for scepticism. The English researchers considered that reproducing the atmosphere of the Victorian *séance* room, in which “the participants sat around in a relaxed and jolly atmosphere, singing songs and hymns, making jokes, and carrying on a conversation among themselves”, was one route to success. And so the Toronto group decided to change tack.

It took a few sessions for everyone seated at the table to achieve a comfortable mix of optimism, alertness and *bonhomie*, but on the fourth session they were all taken aback at feeling a distinct vibration within the table. And then the raps began. Although a collective hallucination was what they had been hoping for, they could hardly ignore the raps, or that “the table started to slide about the floor... quite rapidly, in random fashion, and without any apparent purpose.” They soon established that no one in the group was behind it, but had no idea why it was happening – until one member mused aloud: “I wonder if by chance Philip is doing



ABOVE: Philip, as drawn by a group member.

“MANY A MAN
LIVES A
BURDEN TO
THE EARTH;
BUT A GOOD
BOOKE IS THE
PRECIOUS
LIFE-BLOOD
OF A
MASTER SPIRIT,
IMBALM'D AND
TREASUR'D UP
ON PURPOSE TO
A LIFE BEYOND
LIFE.”

John Milton

this?” At once there was one, very loud, rap from the table. Taking their cue from that, they established a code of communication: one rap meant yes, two raps meant no, and the group would pose appropriate questions. It wasn’t what they had been after or expecting but, as Owen put, they were not going to look this gift horse in the mouth.

The binary yes/no rapping code was simpler and faster, obviously, than having Philip spell out an answer (one rap for A, up to 26 for Z), but it precluded any discursive commentary on his part and laid the group open to the risk of asking leading questions and so getting the answers they wanted or expected. But this didn’t happen: Philip proved recalcitrant, got a bit shirty, and

refused to reply to queries he didn’t like. For instance, it took the group some time to coax him into revealing much about his relations with his wife, Dorothea, although eventually it transpired that she had refused to consummate their marriage of convenience. One could, of course, and perhaps correctly, ascribe this apparent inhibition to indecision on the part of the sitters, or even their *pudeur*, conscious or not. If he didn’t know the answer to a question, he would make “extraordinary scratching noises”, particularly if the enquiry implied an adverse reflection on his frigid yet jealous wife.

Philip also had strong opinions about some songs in the group’s repertoire, especially the parody ‘Lloyd George Knew My Father’, which was sung (as usual) to the tune of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers’. Someone suggested Philip didn’t like it because ‘Onward’ “was one of the songs sung by Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan army.” Philip affirmed with one rap. No one in the group seems to have noticed the gaffe. ‘Onward’ was written by the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865, and set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan (he of *The Mikado*, *Pirates of Penzance*, etc.) in 1871. Could the group have confused it somehow with John Bunyan’s ‘To Be A Pilgrim’? But that wasn’t written till 1684, when Cromwell (and his New Model Army) had been gone for a quarter of a century or so. The episode is a fine illustration of how interdependent were Philip and his creators. Another time, he said Charles I disliked dogs and horses, but loved cats. Which is historically inaccurate, “but the questioner was an ardent cat lover.”

The group took a useful precaution against anyone physically moving the table through which Philip communicated. Members did not directly touch it, but laid their hands on doilies – despite which, it would not only sound raps (usually under the hands of the individual questioner) but sometimes dance about on one or two legs, and once actually levitated.

Several later chapters discuss the Philip experiment’s implications for psychical research in general; inevitably, much of this is speculative. The book ends with a statement that the group would carry on working toward a visible manifestation of their creation. Sadly, this continued effort seems not to have happened. But at least the group had satisfied themselves that they could produce PK effects of a high order. Rather shockingly, it seems too that there have been very few sustained attempts to replicate their work. One can but wonder, a bit sardonically, why not.

(See also FT61:41-42, 166:37, 212:59, 227:16, 302:69, 305:73, 351:18, 381:19.)

Iris M Owen with Margaret Sparrow, *Conjuring Up Philip: An Adventure in Psychokinesis*, Harper & Row, 1976.

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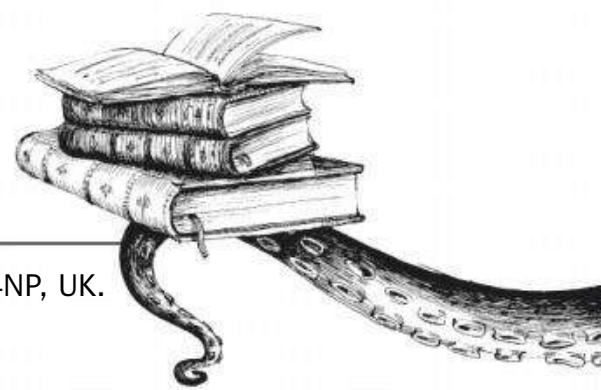
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Who wants to return as a can of milk?

The author of this study does not censor the accounts by young and poor claimants; however, it is aiming not at academic purity but at reflecting the experiences of the real people she interviewed

Claims of Reincarnation

An Empirical Study of Cases in India

Satwant K Pasricha

White Crow Books 2019

Pb, 304pp, bib, ind, £14.99, ISBN 9781786771032

There have not been many serious studies of 'reincarnation' since Professor Ian Stevenson's prolific output through the late 1970s and 1980s, which built upon his acclaimed 1966 study *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (revised in 1974).

Dr Pasricha, a leading clinical psychologist at the Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences, here inherits Stevenson's mantle. It is the first book with a systematic focus upon classic cases of the Indian type for more than 30 years. First published in 1990, it expands her 1978 doctoral thesis (which set out a methodology for investigating and evaluating cases) with a further 15-year research period in which she interviewed "hundreds" of subjects, mainly from northern India.

For those interested in what she learned, the case material is fascinating indeed. Stevenson himself acknowledges that they "may seem difficult to believe", especially for a reader new to the subject, but offers his unequivocal endorsement for the fidelity of Pasricha's work and her professional opinion. She is a curious scientist labouring at the coalface of what seems to be a genuine mystery.

It is all carefully presented, with an introductory chapter which reviews the history of the subject, and others outlining her methods of interviewing and evaluating responses. The results of over 300 interviews (of

varying thoroughness) conducted by herself are sampled – with more attention to 45 cases which provide extra details or more confirmatory data – and followed by an equally interesting chapter exploring the effect of the circumstances upon the behaviour, psychology and beliefs (religious and otherwise) of the claimants and their families.

The Indian cases are also compared to cases from Turkey, Sri Lanka, and the North American tribes of Tlingit and Haida. Sceptics will shudder at the discussions of associated paranormal phenomena that Dr Pasricha encountered in the lives of her interviewees – many of whom were children in often poor families – but she felt, to her credit, that she could not ignore or censor their accounts. In conclusion, Pasricha discusses various associated theories and explanations.

Up to now, the subject of reincarnation in particular seems to trigger the outrage of militant rational sceptics. The claim that distinguishing marks and scars from a 'past life' have shown up on the new incarnate's body, for example, a subject that interested Stevenson, has been dismissed as quintessentially preposterous because there is no known physical or genetic mode of transmission. While the sceptics draw their line there, Dr Pasricha freely admits that much about the subject is still mysterious.

In contrast, she is much more adventurous about testing alternative and 'paranormal' theories against her data. The more mundane explanations involve suggestion, fraud, fantasy, cryptomnesia and paramnesia. The more

"The subject of reincarnation seems to trigger the outrage of militant rational sceptics"

complicated psychological cases involve explanations based upon ESP and 'personation', hypnotic regression, near-death experiences and even 'possession'.

She examines her case material to show how these types were identified and rejected, and feels justified in proposing that the remainder support the theory of reincarnation.

In this, she crosses the limit imposed by sceptics and bravely tackles hypotheses which seem to arise out of the otherwise unexplained data; for example, some psychical form of transmission that transcends time and space, or some form of psychosomatic expression by the old 'soul' in its new body.

Her young and often poorly-educated communicants go on to tell of stranger things, such as their existence beyond death and how they returned to a new life. These ideas, while heretical to Western medical science, have been familiar to all classes of Indian society (and to some other cultures as well) as part of their religious and philosophical traditions.

Any reader who is unfamiliar with the Hindu and Theosophical literature on karma and reincarnation will welcome her chapters on this background which informs her conclusions. Sceptics will, no doubt, condemn

this as a backward and non-scientific step, yet she faces up to the prospect of such criticism by resting her case material in a clear and logical presentation of the phenomenology derived from a statistical analysis of her cases.

One complaint might be that her presentation of her case material is not clinically detached or laid out to academic standards... but then, this is not a thesis, and her interviews clearly reveal Dr Pasricha's sympathetic treatment of her

'cases' as real people. It also makes for easier reading.

Here, then, is the result of a rare and sober investigation which deserves to be read by all.

It would be quite 'unscientific' to shun Dr Pasricha's research as 'unbelievable', fraud or self-deception.

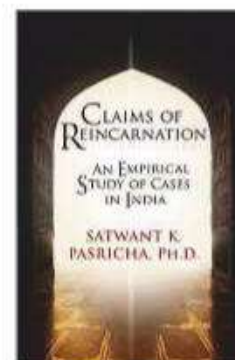
She pleads for further investigation and consideration of her work and the subject itself, and that should be the only intelligent and mature response from the Establishment. The general reader will find much in this careful and impressive study to stimulate their astonishment and wonder.

It seems to me to be a groundbreaking book with far-reaching implications. Dr Pasricha has dared to ask honest questions about a subject scorned by the arrogantly ignorant for too long. While she might not have any solid and satisfying answers, she is definitely asking the right questions.

For these reasons, I heartily recommend it.

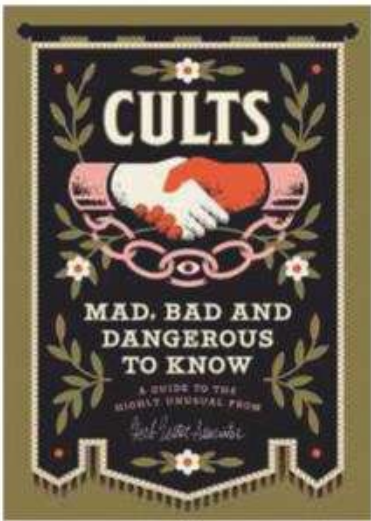
Bob Rickard

★★★★★



The joy of sects

A beautifully produced guide to 30 barmy, and sometimes deadly, alternative religions



Cults

Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know

Kim Cooper, Brian Rau

Herb Lester Associates, 2019

£12, ISBN 9781999343903

This isn't a book about cults, but a beautifully designed map and fold-out guide: on one side is Brian Rau's representation of the United States (and southern Canada), with the primary locations of a wide variety of cults marked with numbers and graphics; on the other are capsule summaries giving the names, active dates, core beliefs and potted histories of 30 cult organisations, big and small, active and defunct.

The drily amusing text is by Kim Cooper, a novelist and historian of the darker side of Los Angeles who runs offbeat history tours of the city; which might explain why southern California gets its own inset map, although that can be attributed equally plausibly to the sheer volume of kooks – from Charles Manson and his 'Family' to the Buddhafield cult – who have called the region home over the years.

There's an intriguing – or terrifying, depending on your point of view – range of beliefs on display here. While, unsurprisingly, most of these groups are lunatic chips off the old blocks of the Religions of the Book (killer Mormons, sex-crazed Seventh Day Adventists), others illustrate

the fall-out from the Western counterculture's turn Eastwards (Rajneesh, ISKCON), the 'occult explosion' and the New Age (the Process Church, Conscious Development) or the call of extraterrestrial wisdom (Heaven's Gate, The Order of the Solar Temple). What tends to link such disparate groups – aside from more-or-less completely bonkers belief systems – are the things we'd usually perceive as markers of 'cult' activity: millennialism, charismatic leaders, curtailment of followers' individual freedom, dodgy financial practices, and the sexual abuse of women and minors.

Most of the heavy-hitters get a look-in, including the Branch Davidians and Jim Jones's People's Temple, but it's nice to see some less obvious choices. I'd forgotten about the Nuwabian Nation, the wildly eclectic black sci-fi religionists who built Egyptian pyramids in rural Georgia before their leader Dwight York was arrested and imprisoned on child sex abuse charges, but apparently they are still out there, awaiting his release. And who could resist the Divine Order of the Royal Arms of the Great Eleven, whose Californian matriarchs offered the secrets of resurrection and mineral wealth? As Cooper tells it: "A ragtag community hung around awaiting the revelations. In the craggy hills above Los Angeles, they danced naked, rubbed cheese behind their ears, mummified their dead, and in at least one horrible case got 'cured' in a brick oven." Yikes!

If you're looking for a sober and non-judgmental source of information on these and other groups, then you should probably get hold of a copy of our own David Barrett's *The New Believers: Sects, 'Cults' and Alternative Religions*. If you're looking for an attractive forteen gift, though, this would do nicely.

David Sutton

★★★★★

The Surrender of Silence

The Memoir of Ironfoot Jack, King of the Bohemians

Ironfoot Jack; ed: Colin Stanley

Strange Attractor Press 2018

Pb, 264pp, illus, notes, bib, appx, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781907222658

Ironfoot Jack Neave is the definition of an unreliable narrator. He deals only with things that are important to him, glossing over arrests and police raids, already covered in the biography *What Rough Beast?* by Mark Benney. This perspective makes *The Surrender of Silence* all the more compelling.

The book, taken from transcribed tapes of Neave's own words, mainly focuses on "how to solve the problem of existence" – making enough of a living that he didn't starve and not working more than necessary. At times this approach involved reselling antiques, books, telling fortunes, selling charms, or fragrances. This is a world of Needies and Grafters, Pearl Divers and China Fakers, the text conjuring a world adjacent to the more settled communities of pre-war Britain.

At a time when there is discussion about the changing character of London, it is interesting to read about a city long-since lost; of Bohemian clubs and occult circles, Caledonian Road Market, and underground cafés. This is a London of black magic and Buddha statues, self-styled yogis and basement temples. In damp cellars across the capital, different philosophies were fused into constantly changing cults, and Ironfoot Jack is a good guide to that mostly hidden world.

Colin Stanley found the transcript while cataloguing Colin Wilson's papers, and has done an excellent job of presenting the self-styled King of the Bohemians in his own words, clarifying points in footnotes and letting Jack speak for himself, something that he was more than capable of doing.

Whether you think 'Professor' Neave was a conman, an expert on the occult, an artist, or just a man constantly on the brink of destitution, this is a highly entertaining book. *The Surrender of Silence* takes us into a colourful, hidden side of London long before punk or the

Swinging Sixties, that has, in Ironfoot Jack's phrase, gone with the wind.

Steve Toase

★★★★★

I Am the Dark Tourist

Travels to the Darkest Sites on Earth

HE Sawyer

Headpress 2019

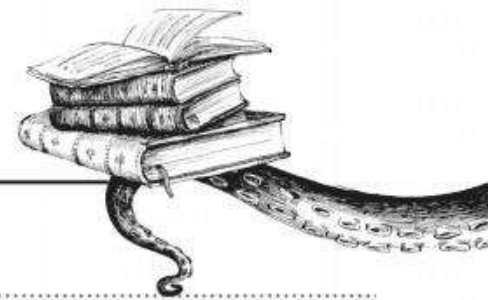
PB, 292pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £15.99, ISBN 9781909394582

The image of the author on the cover of this book – wearing a plague doctor's mask – says something about what to expect inside, as the self-styled hero revisits the 'dark' tourism sites he's travelled to over the past 40 years.

The book opens with Sawyer on a Jack the Ripper tour, and there's a smattering of the casual sexism that can be found throughout the book: "Why are we here if not to see the actual spot where a bloated, stumpy, middle-aged streetwalker was repeatedly stabbed to death over a century ago?"

After this rough start, he launches into the background of dark tourism, detailing the numerous sites worldwide – from Alcatraz to Bodyworlds, as well as more 'niche' locales, like UK serial killer Dennis Nilsen's flat. We learn that there is a dark tourism 'top five wish list' and hear rumours of plans to develop 'Jonestown', where more than 900 people drank cyanide laced Kool-Aid in the Guyanese jungle in 1978.

Sawyer's first stop is the 9/11 Memorial in New York, where he ponders the irony of entering a museum dedicated to events created by hijacked planes through what feels like airport security. In Chernobyl, he smokes cigarettes and drinks vodka like some kind of movie detective. It's a shame that we often seem to get more of the author's life story than information about gems like the Kelvedon Hatch Secret Nuclear Bunker (see FT378:30-36) – a perfect setting for futuristic, post-apocalyptic LARPing. Thankfully, he drops the poetic introductions by the third, shipwreck-themed, chapter, where we go on 'wreck safari' to the *Salem Express*,



down in the Egyptian Red Sea “at the black end of the dark spectrum... There’s an encrusted ghetto blaster, the obligatory and evocative solitary shoe, then a suitcase...” He goes to Australia to dive the *SS Yongala*, in which all 122 people aboard went down with the ship: “I don’t believe in ghosts,” he writes, “but if I did, they’d be here.”

At Auschwitz, he’s fulfilling a promise made to a Holocaust survivor friend, Sissy, who died in 1999. “Sissy’s testimony was part of the ‘Survivors of the Shoah’ Visual History Foundation, founded by film director Steven Spielberg.” Sissy’s tale is probably the highlight of the book. Sawyer paints a loving picture of a woman who was totally nonchalant about being thanked by Steven Spielberg but beside herself when she dropped her walking stick in Marks & Spencer one day and snooker legend Steve Davis picked it up: “OH. MY. GOTT! I COULD NOT BELIEVE IT! STEVE! DAVIS!”

In Cambodia, Sawyer meets survivors of Pol Pot’s regime, observing that he feels “neutered in the presence of survivors at dark sites, as if they only survived in order to benefit tourism and to cater for my curiosity.” I can see why museum staff the world over don’t email him back. At the Tuol Sleng Information office he is “disarmed by [the] age, beauty and stance” of the tour guide before heading to the Killing Fields and making a ridiculous comparison between them and a mini golf course.

Then he’s off to Aokigahra, a Japanese forest famous for suicides: “Once I stepped over the barrier ropes bearing the ‘No Entry’ sign into the forest I was looking for a corpse.” It’s disturbing to say the least. His final stop is the Welsh mining village of Aberfan, where in 1966 150,000 tonnes of mining slurry buried the local school and 20 houses. 144 villagers lost their lives; 116 were children between the ages of seven and 10.”

If you’re willing to ignore the author’s feeble attempts at poetic prose and at times weird observations, the book serves as a detailed and well-researched guide for anyone wanting to travel to places associated with death and the macabre.

Sophie Collard



British, odd and proud of it

For British forteans of a certain vintage, *Watch with Mother* was a gateway to so many horrors (and pleasures, terrors and rumpy-pumpy...)

The Bodies Beneath

The Flipside of British Film & Television

William Fowler & Vic Pratt

Strange Attractor Press 2019

Pb, 398pp, illus, bib, ind, £15.99, ISBN 9781907222726

With its origin in the ‘Flipside’, a celebration of delinquent British cinema and television held at the British Film Institute between 2006 and 2013, Fowler and Pratt’s *The Bodies Beneath* documents their findings into homegrown cinematic oddities. What is on offer is a detailed cultural appraisal of what they acknowledge is a personal selection of film and TV that they tender as a countercultural filmography. No mean task, and yet they manage to convey the complexity of establishing a canon as the relationships between writers, directors and studios are counterpointed with shifts in popular taste and the breakdown of cultural boundaries between high and low art.

Alongside the current interest in the psychogeography of cultural memory and the ‘repressed’, *Bodies Beneath* explores the bubbling id that has both undermined and co-opted our viewing culture. The authors explore convincingly the degree to which mainstream media exploited radical new perspectives laid bare in the wake of the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the decadent embrace of the 1970s. Each of the staples of the ‘typically’ repressed British psyche – sexuality, class, war and fantasy – are scrutinised in highly researched and authoritative studies of individual films and commercially problematic cultural tropes considered taboo.

Quite a trajectory! Take for example Lloyd Bickford’s film, *A40*, a black, gay, dystopian allegory from 1965 (aired in 1971) or Antony Balch’s experimental study of awkward sexuality, *Secrets of Sex* (1970), which, as the authors point out, would leave an expectant cinema audience understandably detumescent. Such errant experimentalism provided a strange bedfellow for everyday sex-romp fodder, and yet by the end of the 1970s avant-garde big hitters such as Cosey Fanni Tutti could be found subverting the genre in the somewhat mystifying *Phœlix* (1979) and yet at the same time modelling for sleaze magnate David Sullivan. Crazy days!

It’s not all about sex, however, and much of the authors’ focus is upon the doom and gloom redolent of post-war Britain. As urban sprawl occupied the countryside, ecological disaster followed close behind. Curious documentary pieces such as *Oss Oss Wee Oss* (1953) cast its wary eye on the eerie and strange traditions that could be found in the English countryside and the anxiety and spiritual malaise urbanisation brought with it is seen in the muted and melancholy desperation of *Robin Redbreast*, a 1970 BBC Play for Today. No area of the human condition remained sacrosanct, we are reminded, as Peter Watkins’s *War Game* (1965) held the nation in post-nuclear abject terror. Well, if the bomb didn’t get you then there was always mental illness or kidnap and torture at the hand of homegrown terrorists as evidenced by Eric Marquis’ *Savage Voyage* (1971) and Howard Brenton’s *Skinflicker* (1973). With one’s dream of a happy future in tatters, perhaps there is something quite reassuring about the comic strangeness of faux Mondo documentaries such as *Primitive*



London (1965) and the arch humour of nudist and witchcraft exposés at the hand of Daniel Farson and his *Out of Step* series (1957). Can things get any weirder, we ask? Yes, of course they

can, and much is made of the British ability to render the most innocent of things fantastical, if not pathological – psychotic even?

Once lulled into a stupor by *Watch with Mother* (1953–1975), our children had to learn to cope with deranged glove puppets, monsters of implicit threat, as Hartley Hare terrorised the living room before Oliver Postgate’s Tottie was witnessed firebombing a doll’s house in 1984. Well now, if that all meant you couldn’t sleep at night, forget about a visit to *Sooty’s Chemist Shop* (1957) where he was found knocking up a few ‘specials’ to take out Sweep. For the adults in the room the Ray Davies’ scripted *Starmaker* (1974) and Charlie Drake’s *Saucerer’s Apprentice* (1970) proffer salutary tales of regression into toxic nostalgia and tackling depression by falling in love with a bedsheet! What was in that tea? To cap it all, if *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* (1952) isn’t enough to send you into therapy then perhaps you’d best join Alex Sanders and his hippy witches – *Secret Rites* (1970) – and tune in, turn on and get your kit off! And why not!

Fowler and Pratt have done a fantastic job here and Strange Attractor has produced an elegant volume worthy of any bookshelf. With plenty of illustrations and a scholarly bibliography to boot, this recalibration of British cinema and TV not only implies a parallel canon of cultural note but wittily examines the British psyche writ large in 35mm.

Chris Hill



The last of the magicians

Alchemy, astrology and occult learning paved the way for modern philosophy and science, argues the author of this superb life of Newton

Newton the Alchemist

Science, Enigma, and the Quest for Nature's "Secret Fire"

William R Newman

Princeton University Press 2019

Hb, 537pp, illus, ind, refs, £30.00, ISBN 9780691174877

For some hardened rationalists, Isaac Newton's interest in alchemy seems to be a rather shameful secret, best ignored. Yet he wrote about a million words on alchemy, and even more on biblical prophecy, sacred architecture, interpreting the Holy Trinity and other religious topics.

John Maynard Keynes famously called Newton the "last of the magicians" and "the last great mind which looked out on the visible and intellectual world with the same eyes as those who began to build our intellectual inheritance" in Babylon and Sumer. Keynes dismissed Newton's alchemical manuscripts as "wholly magical and wholly devoid of scientific value". Yet alchemy isn't intrinsically unscientific. Its theories differ from those of modern chemistry, but many serious alchemists approached their investigations with experimental and intellectual stringency. In this landmark book, Newman points out that Newton employed "elaborate speculation" when deciphering seemingly impenetrable alchemical tracts, but his alchemical experiments were characterised by "extraordinary rigor".

Along with the inevitable confidence tricksters and charlatans, alchemy attracted towering intellects including Robert Boyle, Gottfried Leibnitz and John Locke. As Peter Marshall noted in *The Mercurial Emperor*, alchemy and astrology helped lay the foundations of the 17th century scientific revolution. Occult learning and the pursuit of truth sowed the seeds of modern philosophy and science.

Essentially, alchemists believed that metals consisted of three "principles", the *tria prima*: salt, sulphur and mercury. These correspond, Marshall comments, to the body, soul and spirit and "constitute the world, underlay all phenomena and are to be found in all substances". Alchemical processes could resolve metals into their principles, each of which consists of minute 'corpuscles' – analogous to atoms – that aggregate and separate during alchemical reactions. Geber, a mediaeval writer on alchemy, proposed that elementary corpuscles combined, forming particles of sulphur and mercury. (Paracelsus added salt to the *tria prima* in the 16th century.) These recombined to form minute corpuscles of metals.

Alchemists sought more than to transmute lead into gold: they wanted insights into the nature of reality and its "hidden operations". Discovering the "material soule [sic] of all matter" guided Newton's alchemical experiments for decades. Certainly, he picked the "practical fruits" of his experiments: he devoted considerable energy to developing chemical medicines, for instance. But he routinely considered "the implications [...] for natural philosophy more broadly". Discussing one experiment, Newman points out that Newton "typically [...] tries to employ his [alchemical] knowledge to arrive at the most fundamental level of the problem".

Newton brought the same desire to understand the "fundamental level" of a problem to his scientific work. Some historians and biographers suggest that Newton's alchemical interests contributed to his theory of gravity. Alchemy and the principle of sympathetic magic may have stimulated Newton to consider the idea of hidden cosmic forces and action at a distance.

Newman, however, argues for a stronger connection between alchemy and Newton's optical investigations than with gravity. Paracelsus called alchemy the 'spagyric' art – from the Greek for 'tear apart and gather together'. A prism resolves white light into the colours of the spectrum, which can be recombined. So, at the risk of oversimplifying Newman's eloquent argument, to an alchemical mind, white light is transmuted into the spectrum in the same way that base metals are transmuted into gold.

Newman mentions other alchemists who influenced Newton, such as Michael Sendivogius, who was probably born a Polish peasant but became a counsellor of two Holy Roman Emperors and also worked as a mineralogical expert. Sendivogius transmuted metals using a 'red powder' originally developed by the Scottish alchemist Alexander Seton for the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II. Rudolf analysed the powder to see if it contained gold. It didn't. But Sendivogius couldn't repeat the feat and, Marshall recounts, claimed Seton hadn't given him the right formula before he died. Newton also "pored over" books written by Johann de Monte-Synders – an itinerant alchemist who'd disappear after demonstrating a "transmutation or two" – for decades. Other intellectuals, including Boyle and Benedict Spinoza, investigated such tales to see if there a kernel of truth.

I'd have to be a literary alchemist to distil this book into a review. *Newton the Alchemist* is a volume to savour. The 15 years of work behind the book are clear: it's a remarkable achievement, the definitive work on Newton's alchemical research and essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the occult or science.

Mark Greener

★★★★★

Making Evil

The Science Behind Humanity's Dark Side

Dr Julia Shaw

Canongate Books 2019

Hb, 320pp, £14.99, ind, ISBN 9781786891303



As the subtitle suggests, this journey into evil does not suppose anything supernatural is going on. For better or for worse, people are cause enough.

For Dr Julia Shaw, an academic who has written on false memories (*The Memory Illusion*, 2017), evil is an all-too-human condition, more feature than bug, and more common than we wish to think. Highly readable and disarmingly pleasant, given the subject matter, Shaw stresses that murder, terrorism, exploitation and other assorted human horrors are deeply complicated issues. Therefore, employing a tag like "evil" to describe them is too simple.

Shaw finds evil at play on individual and social levels, and dismantles its objectivity with the tools of neuroscience, psychology and evolutionary biology.

The book begins and ends with Adolf Hitler, first with a hypothetical reconstruction of the dictator's brain, and later with a look at the social compliance aspects of Nazi ideology. In her investigations, Shaw gives an important and interesting twist to Arendt's famous banality of evil concept, emphasising instead the normality of evil.

The case studies lead to the debatable conclusion that evil doesn't actually exist. Or that it does, but functions more like a readymade label, a psychological shield to distance us from our own worst-case potentialities. It's a tricky balancing act to both explain and explode your subject at once, but Shaw makes a good case – and a case for good.

Her call to stop dehumanising others and to question shortcuts in our understanding feels like a necessary, and timely, illumination of the dark. *Making Evil* is a quick read, but its effects are long-lasting.

Mike Pursley

★★★★☆

THE HAUNTED GENERATION

BOB FISCHER ROUNDS UP THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE
PARALLEL WORLDS OF POPULAR HAUNTOLOGY...

“Being half asleep on the couch with German Measles, refusing to eat my Heinz Lentil Soup, with *Crown Court* on. Covered in calamine lotion. My mum had this old lady who came round to look after us, Mrs Wolf. She taught us how to make birdboxes in the cellar. Maybe Quentin’s obsession with birdboxes came from her...”

Listening to filmmaker Sean Reynard’s memories of his 1970s childhood is a wonderful stream-of-consciousness experience. It’s almost as woozily evocative as descending down the Youtube wormhole he has created – a channel devoted to Sean’s alter-ego ‘Quentin Smirhes’, a terrifyingly austere spoof 1970s television presenter with a predilection for elaborate birdboxes and antique crumhorns. I first became aware of Quentin in 2016, when I discovered Sean’s magnificent pastiche of the *Picture Box* titles, a “found footage” extension of the opening sequence to this disquieting 1970s daytime TV fixture. As the ‘picture box’ itself gently rotates, the camera pans to reveal a hidden handle being cranked by the unsettlingly hirsute Quentin, sporting a disconcerting leer and a truly alarming pair of black underpants.

“It was all very reminiscent of Victorian austerity and secret rooms, and shadowy corners,” muses Sean, recalling the original *Picture Box* titles. “A sense of warm claustrophobia, slightly anaesthetised; and then [presenter] Alan Rothwell, with his relentless, hooded eye contact. I’d always wanted to film a wider pan of those titles, and see the whole set-up...” Since then, Sean has cultivated a cottage industry of gloriously strange viral films, all spoofing the dustiest corners of the 1970s regional TV archive, where puppet choirboys are taught the rudiments of mediæval instrumentation, and disembodied fingers poke



from wooden Heath Robinson contraptions, accompanied by the wistful, wobbly strains of Erik Satie’s *Gnossienne No. 1*. Search for the ‘Quentin Smirhes’ channel on Youtube, or follow Sean on Twitter, where he’s @raghard. Meanwhile, committed heliophobes may find respite from the unrelenting summer stickiness by immersing themselves in *The Dark Is Rising*, an imagined TV soundtrack to Susan Cooper’s classic childrens’ novel. This much-loved tale of ancient magic loosed upon a festive, snowbound Buckinghamshire has cast its spell over Finland-based Teessider Rob Colling, aka Handspan. “I asked myself... what would the music sound like if the BBC had

commissioned a mini-series when the book was published, in 1973?” he explains. “My answer was that they would have given it to Peter Howell or Roger Limb or Paddy

Kingsland from the Radiophonic Workshop... and it would have absolutely scared the pants off everyone who heard it.”

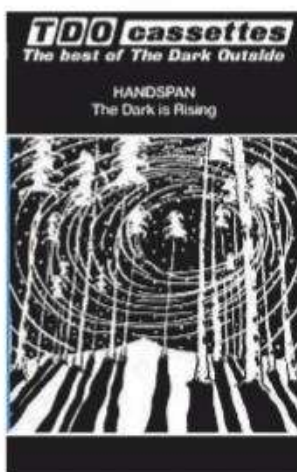
The album is marvellously redolent of Kingsland’s work in particular, and the perfect

musical realisation of a story steeped in traditional myth. “It brings together all kinds of English folklore, from Herne the Hunter to King Arthur,” muses Rob. “And it just caused melodies to start pouring into my brain. They felt like they were 1,000-year-old folk melodies...” Combining

swimmy, retro synths with early instrumentation (you have to admire the dedication of a man who can teach himself to play the Finnish kantele), the album is as crisply keen as the sweeping snowdrifts and slate-grey sky that lend the book such an air of forbidding, suffocating stillness. Following a limited, and quickly sold-out, release on cassette, *The Dark Is Rising* is now available as a digital download from handspanmusic.com.

Other musical gems that have caught my attention this month: the album *Flora*, by Polypores, is an ambient but melodic exploration of a tangled, fantastical woodland, released on the Castles In Space label with a cover that Roger Dean would be proud of; and *Sizewell*, by Robin Saville and Oliver Cherer, builds beautiful organic soundscapes from field recordings made in the environs of Suffolk’s famous nuclear power stations. It’s available from the Modern Aviation label.

Those seeking oddness in more built-up areas should investigate the latest publications from the Folk Horror Revival stable. *Urban Wyrd*, co-edited by FT contributor Andy Paciorek, comes in two volumes (*Spirits of Time* and *Spirits of Place*) and collects essays, reviews and interviews that celebrate – as Adam Scovell puts it in his introduction – “dark skulduggery and strangeness beyond the reasonable confines of what we consider part of city life”. Further contributors include Will Self and Iain Sinclair, with Paciorek himself providing his own share of quirkiness... his exploration of “wyrd *Trumpton*” tickled me, as did his ruminations on the haunted qualities of motorway service stations. Both books are available from folkhorrorrevival.com/tag/urban-wyrd, with all proceeds going to the Wildlife Trusts conservation charity.



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Alien autopsy

A new documentary finds plenty of new things to say about the Dan O'Bannon/Ridley Scott classic, from exploring its visual inspirations in fine art to bringing a feminist perspective to bear on the film



Memory: The Origins of Alien

Dir Alexandre O Philippe, US 2019
On UK release from 30 Aug, DVD & VOD from 2 Sept

Ridley Scott's *Alien* is many things: a superlative sci-fi horror film; a designer's dream; a synthesis of what came before it and a template for a lot of what came after it. But can it withstand deep scrutiny of its cultural origins, its original ideas, and its subtexts? This new documentary subjects the film to just such a rigorous examination and I'm happy to say *Alien* holds up remarkably well.

One of the reasons why the film was, and remains, so massively popular is because it tapped into myths and imagery that have fascinated and haunted mankind for thousands of years. This documentary makes a fine job of detailing these and making it clear just how deep the well is that the likes of writer Dan O'Bannon, director Scott, and artist HR Giger drew from. Taking

It tapped into myths that have haunted mankind for millennia

imagery alone, the film cites Egyptian, Hindu, Mesopotamian and mediæval English mythologies, as well depictions of Renaissance demons and the work of Hieronymous Bosch. Most remarkable of all perhaps is Francis Bacon, whose paintings – particularly *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* – bear a striking resemblance to some of *Alien*'s most iconic images.

As well as art history this documentary isn't afraid to delve into religion, philosophy, psychoanalytic film theory and, perhaps most notably, feminism. One critic makes the point that Ash, the android, has been created, programmed, and educated so that he not only

resembles a human being but can also *pass as* a human being. This makes his subsequent assault on Ripley, and his attempt to orally penetrate her with a rolled up magazine, especially troubling.

Having said all that, *Memory* is not at all a dry film. Thanks to plenty of details about the script's genesis and the film's production you never get the impression that the documentary is an arid intellectual exercise. Gratifyingly, it places Dan O'Bannon front and centre in terms of the film's existence, which is not always the case with *Alien* documentaries. There are also new interviews with many of the behind-the-camera personnel as well as cast members Tom Skerritt and Veronica Cartwright.

I've seen *Alien* a good few times over the years but this film sheds new light on some of the ideas within it. It's an absolute must, not just for *Alien* fans but for anyone interested in how art is created.

Daniel King



Leprechaun Returns

Steven Kostanski, US 2018
Lionsgate, £7.99 (DVD)

This double DVD set gives us not just the recent *Leprechaun Returns*, directed by Steven Kostanski, but throws in an extra disc containing the original *Leprechaun* movie created, produced and directed by Mark Jones back in 1993.

In the first film, Daniel O'Grady (Shay Duffin) steals the leprechaun's gold in Ireland and takes it back to the USA. The leprechaun follows Daniel to get his gold back, but he is imprisoned for 10 years before he is inadvertently released by Jennifer Aniston, and goes on another murderous rampage to get his gold back. Eventually, he is trapped inside a well.

Leprechaun Returns takes us back to the well where the leprechaun was banished 25 years previously. Ignoring the numerous intervening *Leprechaun* sequels, it also attempts to correct some of their errors. Nonetheless, due to a dispute over his salary, Mark Jones dropped out of this project. Warwick Davis, who played the part of the leprechaun in all but one of the previous films, also sat out this one because he wanted to take a break from horror films, and is replaced by Linden Porco. The production was also unable to get Jennifer Aniston to reprise her role as Tory Redding, and instead Heather McDonald imitates her voice when the leprechaun promises he can bring her back to life.

This time Lila (Taylor Spreitler), Tory's daughter, goes back to her mum's old home which she plans to fix up and turn into eco-friendly habitat with a group of her fellow female students during their summer vacation.

Things don't go well (pardon the pun) from the beginning,



when Lila has to take a taxi to the house and the driver Ozzie Jones (Mark Holton, who appeared in the original film), talks darkly about knowing her mother. For good measure, the inside of his pick-up truck is plastered with pictures of four-leaf clovers, indicating he still needs some form of protection against the leprechaun. At the house, Lila finds the students busily engaged in repairing the cursed well; unknowingly, of course, they have given the leprechaun a way of (literally) erupting back into life: a geyser of green goo falls upon the hapless taxi driver and, in a scene reminiscent of the chestbuster sequence in *Alien*, the fully formed leprechaun climbs out of the man's body. Everything is now set-up for him to track down the pot of gold that was stolen from him in the original film and kill off the students at this remote location, dispatching them one by one using a multitude of gory and inventive methods.

The leprechaun embodies the unbridled forces of the id, and his lust for gold above all else is symbolic of capitalist greed. *Leprechaun Returns* is obviously a cabin-in-the-woods/teen-slasher movie, and on that level it is well executed. It's a bit sad that the stereotypical iconography of the leprechaun is used to produce a monstrous creature who enjoys inflicting gruesome deaths on anyone who disrespects him or gets between him and his gold. Traditionally, Irish leprechauns are certainly grumpy but they were never this hostile towards humanity. The franchise simply hijacks a well-known folkloric figure for its own purposes and endows it with all types of supernatural abilities, including shape-shifting, flying, telekinesis and being virtually indestructible.

Both films are wonderfully inventive, campy gore-fests, it's just the luck of the Irish that one of their best known mythical characters is transformed into a wise-cracking, remorseless green monster who is the pure embodiment of evil.

The *Leprechaun Returns* DVD also contains a behind-the-scenes feature, a stills gallery and an interview with director Steven Kostanski.

Nigel Watson



THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

Hail Satan?

Dir Penny Lane, US 2019

On UK release from 26 July

There's a telling moment early on in *Hail Satan?* when an American Satanist, complete with black cape and huge goats' horns, gets ready for a political protest on the steps of the Florida Capital. "Hail Satan!" he cries dramatically and flips his arm out... but the pyros on his wrist don't go off. He tries again. An awkward click, then nothing. He chuckles and tries once more. *Boom*. Fire shoots out and he cries "Hail Satan!" one more time. It's a window into the heart of Penny Lane's latest documentary, which presents members of the Satanic Temple as people just like you and me: human beings, trying to do what they believe is right. These aren't the power hungry aristocrats of a Dennis Wheatley novel, plunging daggers into virgins. They're more like a political pressure group for the millennial generation, with goals that are more in step with mainstream morality than you might expect.

Okay, so their methods can be eye-popping. At one point, they protest infamous 'God Hate's Fags' preacher Fred Phelps by getting gay couples to make out on Phelps's mother's grave. They invoke a spell that will turn her departed soul into a raging lesbian. Then the leader gets his nuts out and rests them on the grave for a selfie. So, yes, these Satanists can be pretty in-your-face. Yet the film's interviewees claim, quite persuasively, that trolling people with shocking performance art like this is far less damaging than picketing gay people's funerals with 'Burn In Hell' placards.

The main target of their



Members of the Satanic Temple are people just like you and me

protests is, unsurprisingly, fundamentalist evangelicals. The film charts this as an antagonism born in the 1960s with Anton LaVey and significantly exacerbated by the Satanic panics of the 1980s and 1990s. The teens who were told to stop playing Dungeons and Dragons and burn their heavy metal albums grew to see the Church mired in scandal after scandal: adultery, horrific child abuse, and shocking



cover-ups. Disgusted at the hypocrisy, some simply turned from Christianity and embraced atheism instead. Yet not everyone was ready to ditch the religious framework completely. As one interviewee explains: "Being an atheist is boring; it's defining what you're not. But Satanism... it stands for something."

Viewers not savvy with the religion will find some helpful myth-busting here. The idea that Satanists don't believe in Satan for example (he's just a central symbol for personal liberation, a figurehead for a dramatic counter-myth to Christianity). Their mission to erect statues of Baphomet in public spaces, or to institute Satanic prayers in council meetings isn't meant to see the world at the mercy of an 'evil power'; rather they're calling out the unfair dominance of Christianity in post-Christian US politics and asking just how free we *really* are today.

I'm a Christian myself... so am I encouraging readers, and even my fellow churchgoers, to watch *Hail Satan?* Hell, yeah! It's not without fault – for one thing, it doesn't cover any other forms of Satanism – but if you can handle pixelated testes on gravestones, you'll find a funny and fascinating exploration of how people respond to a judgmental and graceless Christianity. Talibangelicals like Phelps are a world away from the kind-hearted openness of Jesus, and so it's no wonder that so many turn away from the Church. It's also intriguing to see that even without the demands of strict religious frameworks, Satanists still seem to strive for the common 'good'. Ironically, that might be evidence of us all having the spark of divinity after all – even those of us with goats' horns. In the end, *Hail Satan?* isn't the definitive guide to contemporary Satanism – and it doesn't claim to be. But for those interested in the religious and political landscape of 2019, it's an essential window into *now*.



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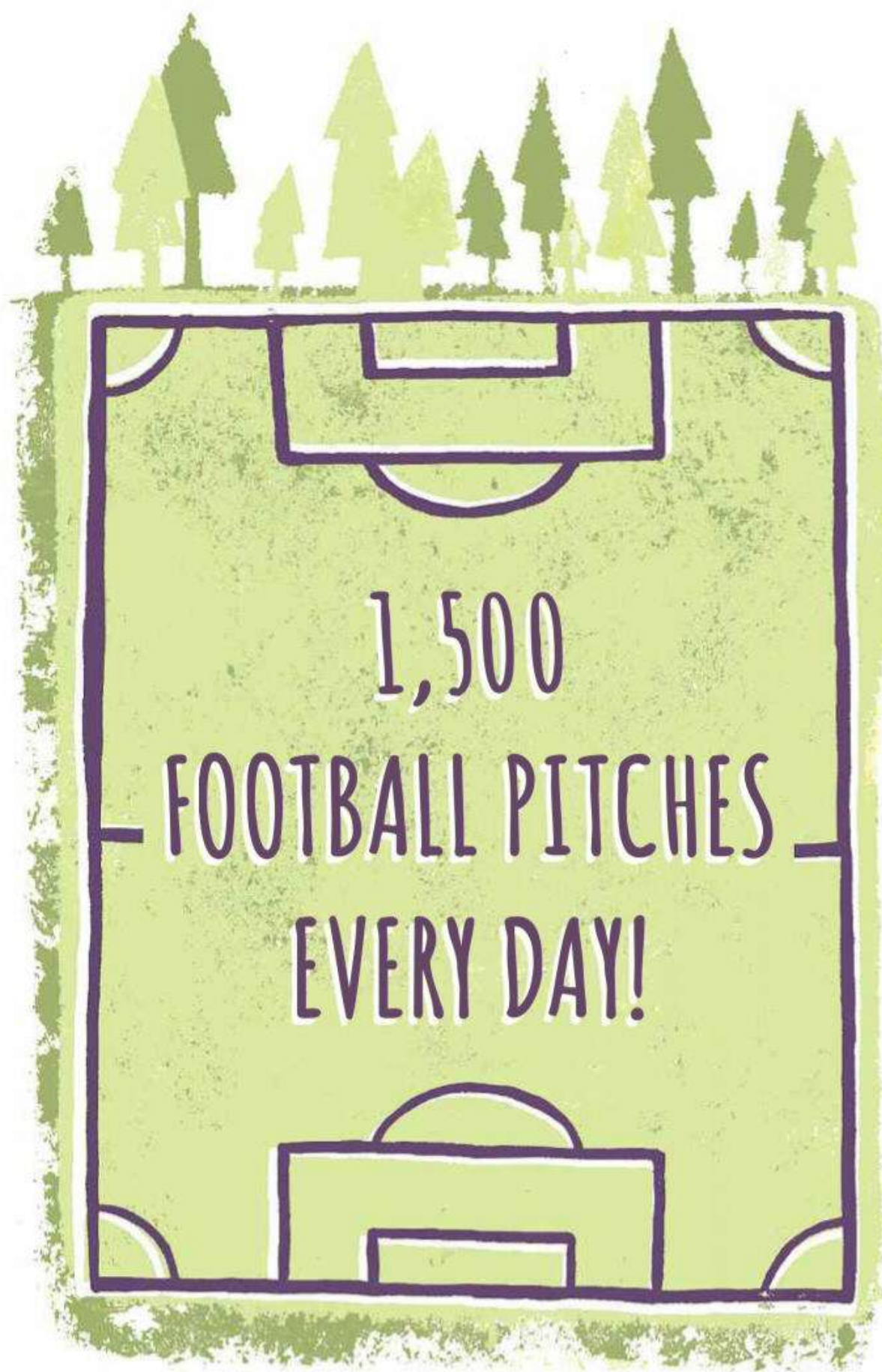
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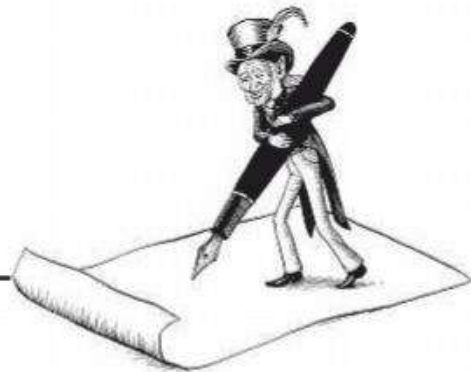
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Nijinsky walrus

While reading *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, I noticed the following rather mystical pronouncement: “You are he and I am he. We are we you are they.” I was struck by how similar this was to John Lennon’s wild, declamatory opening lines to ‘I am the Walrus’: “I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together...” Nijinsky’s line is the opening one of a poem – a collection of sonic puns that read like a rock lyric from 1967, rather than 1919, when it was actually written. This coincidence, perhaps minor in itself, is then compounded. Twenty-five lines later, our Vaslav exclaims: “You are gu gu gu gu gu...” This is startlingly close to Lennon’s famous cry of “Goo goo g’joob.” So then, two Whitmanesque barbaric yawps a half century apart... interesting, but perhaps not too surprising given the counterculture’s propensity for mining congenial outsider texts?

Yes... but Lennon would only have had access to the 1936 version of the *Diary*, heavily edited by Nijinsky’s widow Romola – and shorn of all its wilder passages. The unexpurgated edition was only published in 1999. While switching off his mind, relaxing and floating downstream in those heady days, did Lennon have a precognitive interlude? Or did he consult the Akashic Records?

Mervyn Gale

Macclesfield, Cheshire

Faulty wiring?

My father once knew someone (one of his academy lecturers, I think) who was smashed up in a horrific car accident. He managed

to get himself back together and started working again, but he acquired the tic of interjecting the word ‘tråden’ (‘the thread’) into his speech at random intervals. He himself had no idea what this was supposed to mean; it was just a wiring fault.

Nils Erik Grande

Oslo, Norway

Folk Horror

I thoroughly enjoyed Gail-Nina Anderson’s brilliant feature on the ‘Folk Horror Revival’ [FT381:36-43]. Here are some further recommendations to any readers new to this genre.

The first point that struck me about the idea of a ‘revival’ was that the images and ideas of folk horror have never gone away in some genres of music, most notably avant garde and weird folk, with lines like streams of the maypole flowing outwards from Comus, the Incredible String Band and Paul Giovanni and Magnet’s *Wicker Man* soundtrack, to the output of bands like Current 93 (thinking of albums like *Earth Covers Earth*), Nature and Organisation (who covered ‘Willow’s Song’ as ‘The Wicker Man Song’) and Alasdair Roberts, who having carved his own niche as a folk artist is now a part of David Tibet’s Current 93 family. Every now and again such imagery slips briefly into the mainstream – I think particularly of ‘The Young Knives’ and their Mercury-nominated album, *Voices of Animals and Men* – and I note that the Fat White Family, whose new album *Serf’s Up* has been well received, have produced a video very much inspired by folk horror for their song, ‘When I leave’.

We also see folk horror in modern literary fiction, with Andrew Michael Hurley’s *The Loney* (2014) and *Devil’s Day* (2017): the former includes some very menacing examples of pace-egging and mummery, while the lat-

ter draws its horror from a folk legend that casts a long shadow down the years for a small rural community. While any director seeking to adapt these books will struggle to capture the atmosphere that the writer so skilfully evokes, I hope that some brave souls will film them in years to come.

If we need reminders of the “old ways”, the BFI’s *Here’s a Health to the Barley Mow* is a fantastic two-disc documentary record of British folk traditions, including sword dances, the obby oss, the burry man, and much, much more. If we wish to consider the symbols and motifs of folk horror, this collection provides much to draw on for writers, artists, filmmakers and musicians. I think of films like Ben Wheatley’s *Kill List* (2011), which – while on the outer edges of what we think of as folk horror – borrows some of its tropes and images.

And whether we have a ‘revival’ or not, Gail-Nina Anderson is certainly in tune with the zeitgeist: as I write this letter, Ari Aster’s much-promoted Sweden-based folk horror film *Midsommar* hits the cinemas, and the newspapers are very excited by the Sky/HBO collaboration, *The Third Day*, which apparently involves a visitor to an island off the British coast who starts to investigate the strange rituals practised by the islanders... Now where have we seen that before?

Andrew Mitchell

Bourne, Lincolnshire

Duck hive mind

Nick Maloret’s account of a group of 10 ducks “waddling towards him” in South Harting [FT381:75] reminded me of a phenomenon that used to be observable in the Suffolk village of Westleton. The village’s duck colony on the village pond (it had an informal “duck warden” who kept an eye on them) used to be a ragtag group of mostly mallards, but also some khaki Compton’s, the odd Chinese water duck and the occasional Muscovy duck. On one occasion there were geese that attached themselves to the colony. What was odd about them was that they seemed to have a group

hive mind; they would suddenly all waddle towards you on the village green (next to the pond) and surround you, quacking loudly. It was like something out of *Village of Damned*. On another occasion, a local moorhen joined in when the duck group hive mind surrounded me.

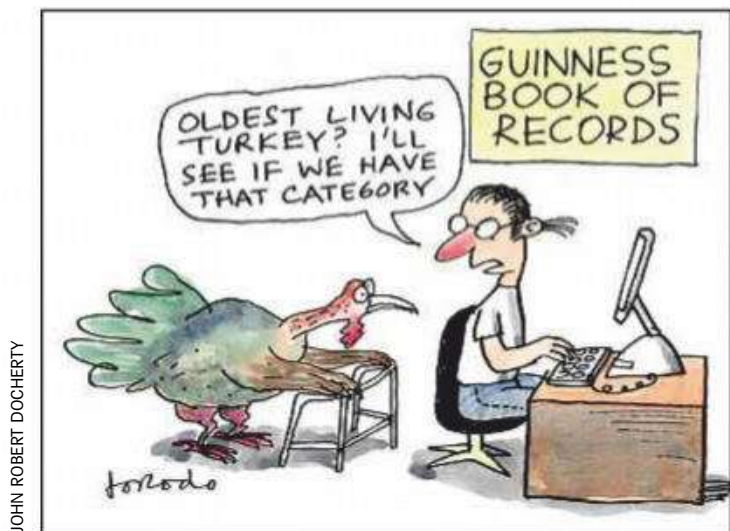
I once cycled with my girlfriend and her cat, up for his holidays and in his cat box strapped to a bike rack after being picked up with me from the nearest station. We took a quick break as we cycled through Westleton. It was a short while before the Westleton duck group hive mind started surrounding our cat in a box on the back of a bike. Our normally very bold tomcat went nuts, he totally panicked. So we cycled out of the village quickly.

Then one year all the ducks were suddenly weird-looking mallard/khaki Compton hybrids. (My late mother told me that variety of duck was called khaki Comptons – dark brown with a white chest.) They didn’t seem particularly fertile hybrids; there were only a few small, weird-looking black ducklings that year. The next year, by contrast, they had many ducklings, most of whom survived. The Westleton duck colony still does its weird rallies and parades across the village green, but it’s much calmer now; it doesn’t seem to surround passers-by so much. The strange assortment of different breeds of duck (and the odd goose) seems to have left the colony too. It’s now mostly the standardised mallard/khaki Compton hybrids.

• Eric Hoffman’s review of *Unexplained* [FT381:61] asks what “the events at Skywalker Ranch [tell us] about the nature of reality”. The events at Skywalker Ranch, California, home of director George Lucas’s Lucasfilm and the production base for the *Star Wars* films, probably consist mainly of making films, especially in the *Star Wars* franchise. This should have been Skinwalker Ranch, Utah, home of all sorts of High Strangeness. Could an overactive spell-checker be the culprit?

Matt Salusbury

Dunwich, Suffolk



JOHN ROBERT DOCHERTY

Meon Hill

Regarding the article about Charles Walton being murdered on Meon Hill [FT381:44-51]: there was a piece about this on the BBC TV programme *Nationwide* sometime in the mid 1970s. I was still at primary school at the time. I remember them filming in the pub; no one in there would speak to them and a lot finished their drinks and went. My father says that he can remember it happening. I have since read an article saying that the murder was over wages and that the killer gave the murder an occult spin to throw investigators off the scent. In the late 1970s/early 80s I was in a scout group at Newbold-on-Stour, near Lower Quinton. We used to borrow a transit van from one of their community groups if we went camping. As youngsters I remember that we used to tell tall (and probably untrue) friend-of-a-friend stories about Meon Hill, so it had a lot of supernatural stories associated with it.

A couple of summers ago and a few months later with a walking group, I went for a walk round Meon Hill. The first time was a beautiful summer's



Sunday morning. There are at least two supernatural stories attached to it. One was that the Devil lobbed a huge lump of earth at Evesham Abbey, newly completed nearby. St Ecgwin saw it incoming, so he prayed and it fell to earth, creating Meon Hill. Another is that the Wild Hunt used to pass over there. There was an Iron Age hillfort there, so I don't know if the belief has something to do with that. The other victim mentioned in the article, Anne(e) Tennant, came from a village called Long Compton. This is just down the hill from the Rollright Stones, which have all kinds of associations with the supernatural and witchcraft. It was said at one time that there were enough witches in Long Compton to draw a fully loaded hay wagon

up Long Compton Hill.

Gary Stocker

Radford Semele, Warwickshire

I took this photo (above) a couple of months ago whilst I was over the road, in the church there, conducting a funeral. I had absolutely no idea that 1940s 'witchcraft' murder victim Charles Walton apparently lived in this very row of cottages in Lower Quinton [FT381:47]. It was the thatched fox on the roof that caught my attention.

Bruce Chatterton

By email

Eerie parallels

I'm struck, reading Cathi Unsworth's account of the Meon Hill incident [FT381:44-51], by what a recurring scenario

this is. In both the Clophill and Clapham Wood cases, documented by Kevin Gates and Toyne Newton respectively, we have a hill, occult activity, taciturn and suspicious villagers, and the death of an old man. Harry Snelling, retired vicar of Clapham and Patching, was found dead in the area in mysterious circumstances. In 1986 Tim Humphrey encountered a Black Dog in Bluebell Wood, a site near Clophill also notorious for Black Magic, and not long afterwards his grandfather was found dead in the vicinity near chalk pits, although foul play was ruled out. Finally, Fay's unease and decision to turn back on Meon Hill echoes the experiences of Charles Walker climbing into Clapham Wood, and those of many visitors to Clophill ascending Old Church Path. I don't know what's going on here; a kind of morphic resonance, perhaps?

- I've just bought some Tesco flat peaches. The variety, according to the label, is *UFO 4!* Edible UFOs? I've heard of the mince pie Martians and Joe Simonton's outer space pancakes, but this is ridiculous!

Richard George

St Albans, Hertfordshire

Metaphysical temptations

Graeme Jefferies is a New Zealand musician with an international cult following for his musical endeavours in 1980s NZ post-punk bands Nocturnal Projections and This Kind Of Punishment, and his subsequent (and still-active) indie outfit The Cakekitchen. In his recently published memoir *Time Flowing Backwards* (Mosaic Press 2018), Jefferies recounts a curious period in Germany when his life took on a distinctly paranormal bent. Then living in Recklinghausen, Jefferies's German wife developed an interest in New Age practices courtesy of a friend who introduced her to the use of pendulums as a divination technique. However, this

interest quickly got out of hand for Jefferies as his wife "drifted into a crowd that had more to do with faith healing, ghost healing, and even some aspects of black magic".

His wife quickly succumbed to the metaphysical temptations of magic and spiritualism, which Jefferies evocatively describes in the following passage: "To this day, I don't really understand some of the things I saw during her initiations into some of these practices. She had a communication with what she said was her spirit guardian. You could actually see it sometimes. It was unknowable and otherworldly. I can't really compare it to anything else that's describable in terms of human language. It certainly wasn't human. It presented itself as a

form of crystallized light. It could penetrate a three-foot-wide stone wall like it was a pound of butter. It may have been more than just one entity.

"There was no way of really knowing what she was immersing herself in. To this day, I don't really know what these things really were but she trusted them implicitly. Things were going seriously wrong. The rogues and the vagabonds of the spirit world were not my cup of tea. They could tell you anything. I only wanted to know about Reiki to fix myself up or maybe one of my friends, but these strange creatures of light were becoming really important to [her]".

The marriage gradually foundered as her behaviour became more and more erratic, leaving Jefferies several times in order

to find herself as a healer, and developing paranoia "about all the things that other astral entities could do"; a talented painter, these fears led her to destroy some of her best work. In these respects, Jefferies's account can be read as a contemporary real-life version of time-honoured cautionary tales about the dangers of dabbling in the occult. However, Jefferies also provides something of a happy ending, stating that his ex-wife eventually "went on to do really great things in healing and had a lot of success with healing horses. There's big money in the gee-gees, and she flew all over Europe giving winners a helping hand and made and lost several fortunes along the way" (pp 104-106).

Dean Ballinger

Hamilton, New Zealand

SIMULACRA CORNER

Faces and figures in nature sent in by FT readers



TOP LEFT: Rachael Haines found this green figure in Dartmouth and christened it "the moss sloth".

TOP RIGHT: Paul Jacques spotted this snappy fellow in the Margravine cemetery, west London.

ABOVE: Jan Barker photographed this 'crocodile' at a stretch of coast known as Morrison's Haven in Prestonpans, East Lothian, Scotland. (The little girl is unnamed.)

LEFT: Zoe Barkham sent us this snowy pterosaur (or is it a Thunderbird?), which had landed in High Broom Wood, West Wickham, in Kent.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

LETTERS

Applied Behaviour Analysis

Whilst I'm somewhat disappointed that you chose to print such an ableist dismissal [by James Golbey, FT377:74] of the least fortan point made in my letter [FT374:74], I'm hoping this will be an opportunity to raise awareness about both autism in adults and the horrors of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA). The desire to make us "normal" has always existed even before diagnostic labels and ABA, as the changelings all knew – ABA is just a modern, organised form of beating the weirdness out of us.

Functional labels are misleading and harmful, and this is why modern diagnostics is moving away from using them. They are often weaponised by parents: your correspondent dismisses me as "biased high functioning" purely because I can compose a letter containing something he dislikes (it takes me several hours, incidentally). Autism doesn't work that way; we have different strengths and weaknesses. I am hyperlexic, but I also have executive functioning issues and other problems that mean I can't reliably manage my life or even my basic personal hygiene and nutrition. I have physical co-morbidities that mean I am prone to frequent injury and daily pain. I also have self-injurious stims [repetitive behaviour by autistic people], which have frequently left me bleeding and/or concussed. On a good day, after 40-odd years of practice, I can exhaust myself masking it all and pass for "high functioning"; on a bad day I can't. The day I most look forward to is the day when I don't feel forced to describe my disabilities for strangers who feel better qualified to talk about what it's like to grow up autistic than actual grown up autistics. Us lucky old "high functioning adults" are on exactly the same spectrum except we can tell people what it's like in here, but no one cares and when we say things that the parents don't want to hear we are dismissed.

Parents are quick to point out that ABA no longer uses physi-

cal punishment and so it isn't abusive. This reflects society's general move away from corporal punishment, but it hasn't changed the underpinning principles of ABA. The founder of ABA, Ole Ivar Lovaas, didn't even think autistic children were people and wanted to train us, like Pavlov and his dog. He said, "You have a person in the physical sense — they have hair, a nose and a mouth — but they are not people in the psychological sense... it as a matter of constructing a person. You have the raw materials, but you have to build the person."¹ These sentiments would be very familiar to the changelings! (In the 1970s, Lovaas also carried out government-funded experiments with this technique on gay and gender nonconforming children; one went on to kill himself because of the damage done.)²

Lovaas "built the person" using electric shocks and dramatic beatings, allowing children to receive affection only when they managed to stifle their normal behaviour. "Spank them, and spank them good," he said. Here he is talking about 'Beth', an early patient:

"I just reached over and cracked her one right on the rear. She was a big fat girl so I had an easy target... she stopped hitting herself for about 30 seconds and then, you see, she sized up the situation, laid out her strategy and then she hit herself once more... At first I thought, 'God, what have I done,' but then I noticed that she had stopped hitting herself. I felt guilty, but I felt great. Then she hit herself again and I really laid it on her. You see, by then I knew that she could inhibit it, and that she would inhibit it if she knew I would hit her. So I let her know that there was no question in my mind that I was going to kill her if she hit herself once more, and that was pretty much it. She hit herself a few times after that, but we had the problem licked."³

We're still on familiar changeling turf here, I'm sure. But these days we (should) know better. Autistic people don't self-harm for no reason. Usually it's

triggered by sensory or mental overload, manifesting in situations that we find desperately uncomfortable that we've been forced into because we live in a "normal" world. Instead of finding out why Beth hit herself, they made her terrified of hitting herself. Before the beating, she was in a state of overload; after it, she was still in a state of overload, but terrified as well. ABA is literally advocating for autistics the sort of treatment that would be considered abuse if done to a person with any other condition that caused "challenging" behaviour.

Modern ABA doesn't shock or beat, but it is still an intensive programme of behaviour modification using punishment and reward, of which 40 hours a week is recommended from as early as possible. It focuses on behaviour and ignores needs.⁴ Parents and therapists just don't recognise the abuse because they don't know what it's like to be autistic and they don't learn how to communicate with us.⁵ ABA teaches them that autistic feelings don't matter, that their experience of the world is invalid, that they must bottle up discomfort for the comfort of others. It teaches them that their needs, their feelings and their consent don't matter. It's teaching them that their senses are wrong, that autism is wrong, they are defective, they just need to learn to be "normal", maintain that painful eye contact and keep their damn hands still and then their parents will finally accept the changeling in their midst.

Many parents brag about how they have "cured" their children, but there is no cure, just children learning masks. Forty hours a week would brainwash anyone into being anything. It's not a success to make autistic kids unhappy and terrified. Even articles praising ABA, with parents who think their children are cured, are full of evidence that the children are just masking and are setting themselves up for a whole mess of adult issues. In one article, a "cured" boy even says: "I miss the excitement... When I was

little, pretty often I was the happiest a person could be. It was the ultimate joy, this rush in your entire body, and you can't contain it. That went away when my sister started teasing me and I realised flapping wasn't really acceptable."⁶

I'm too disabled to be a parent but I am pretty sure that I would never, ever brag to the *New York Times* that I had "cured" my wombfruit of their happiness just because their bitch of a sister was embarrassed.

In America, where ABA is often the only therapy insurers will pay for, some practitioners aren't even actually doing ABA. They are instead providing something more like occupational therapy, trying to understand what triggers self-harm and meltdowns, and calling it ABA so it can be accessed! Many have written about how they stopped practising ABA when they realised it was abusive.⁷ There are alternatives that work, and don't abuse or devalue children.⁸

If all this doesn't ring true to Mr Golbey's experience, if it isn't 40-hours a week of intensive behaviour modification he's inflicting on his child, then it isn't ABA and he really shouldn't be reactively defending abuse.

Zoe-Dawn Anderson
Bexleyheath, London

FOOTNOTES

1 http://neurodiversity.com/library_chance_1974.html

2 <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/US/06/07/sissy.boy.experiment/index.html>

3 http://neurodiversity.com/library_chance_1974.html

4 https://theaspergian.com/2019/03/28/invisible-abuse-aba-and-the-things-only-autistic-people-can-see/?fbclid=IwAR30xczavnzLMDKY_h_xPkoV8Mj7XQmmGs3nUx-lej8l1g8T7T31YpVvjM

5 www.psy.ox.ac.uk/publications/672990

6 www.nytimes.com/2014/08/03/magazine/the-kids-who-beat-autism.html

7 <https://madasbirdsblog.wordpress.com/2017/04/25/i-abused-children-and-so-do-you-a-response-to-an-aba-apologist/>

8 www.thinkingautismguide.com/2017/04/if-not-aba-then-what.html

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts of strange experiences from *FT* readers

Pub vanishes

Stories of people discovering delightful restaurants in deepest rural France and then failing to find them or any trace of them on revisiting seem to abound. Here's my Lakeland equivalent.

In 1983 a friend and I were on a short break, walking to Raven-glass via Wrynose and Hardknott passes in the Lake District. We stayed the first night, Sunday 18 September, in Ambleside. The following morning, as we approached the ascent to Wrynose, I commented that we hadn't packed any food or water. Shortly afterwards, as we were ascending the pass, we came across a pub. I recall that it lay off the road to the right, along a short track, perhaps 50 yards or so. It looked like it was, or had been, a farmhouse. Surprisingly, it was open.

I don't recall much detail of the interior, but it was basic, probably from the 1950s or 60s. What sticks in my mind, apart from not serving food, was the beer – Wilson's bitter. I remarked that it was unusual to find that Manchester beer around there. It was also unusual to find such a remote pub still in business. We had a pint and carried on our way. On reaching Boot we took the Lal Ratty down to Raven-glass, where we had booked in at the Pennington Arms.

About 12 years later, I found myself back in this area, on a day out with my aging mother and my brother. As we approached Wrynose my memory was jogged and I told them about the pub, pointing up the hillside where I expected it to be. I said it would probably no longer be a pub. Not only was there no building, but there was no track or any sign of a track or building at all. We drove on towards Hardknott as I expected I had got the two confused and the mystery would be solved, but no. With a deepening sense of frustration and unease, I insisted we turn back and retrace our tracks. Still no sign.

It's fair to say that the lie of



ABOVE: The ascent at Wrynose as photographed by the Cleveland Wheelers

the land was different from what I remember. I recall it being more open and bleaker (if that's possible!). I realised then how unreliable memory could be, but I had recourse to two sources of potential confirmation – my friend, of course, and my diary.

I dug it out and, yes! there it was, Monday 19th September 1983 "1 Wilson's B" ... but no pub name! Aaargh! But at least it confirmed that we had visited a pub and the beer was as I recall.

When I spoke to my friend, I was careful not to ask any leading questions that might influence his recollection. Amazingly, his memories were pretty well identical to mine – pub up the hill, off to the right along a short track, looked like a farmhouse. I told him why I was asking him but he didn't seem quite as exercised about it as I was. We must have got it wrong, he said. Well yes, but what are the chances of us both having identical wrong memories?

I pursued various lines of enquiry with the local council, the local CAMRA branch, and checked old OS maps, but all to no avail. The only pub in that area was, and still is, the Three

Shires. I have since revisited the area at least twice and this pub bears no relation to the one we recall. As I said, memory can be unreliable, but how can *both* of us be mistaken so wildly and yet with such corroborative false memories?

More than the possibility of a phantom pub or a parallel universe, what irks me is the machinations of the brain and the implications of distorted or false memory. The former (if they exist) are external, possibly imposed or just somehow stumbled upon; the latter much more troublesome, posing questions about who we are, what makes us tick and our very conception and perception of the world.

Martin Firth
Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

Editor's note: for the wonderful memorate of a vanishing Armenian restaurant in Iran, see FT177:47.

Yorkshire spaceman

In the autumn of 2012, my brother and I were living in the picturesque town of Holmfirth, West Yorkshire, and would regularly walk to and from the pub

during the summer months. One evening we were walking back from the pub on a lane only partially lit by streetlights. It must have been late August or early September as it was dark. As we walked towards the lit end of the lane, we became aware of someone walking towards us. As he drew closer we could see that it was a man dressed in full spacesuit including boots and helmet. He walked straight past without acknowledging us. The visor was up on his helmet, so we could see it was an adult male of average height. We exchanged quizzical glances and watched where he was heading. When he got about 100 yards down the road, he veered left through a gate into a field before breaking into a run and disappearing onto the moors, scattering sheep as he went. Although we had consumed a couple of drinks over the course of the evening, we were far from intoxicated and we both had clear memories of the incident the following day. It was a very unusual sight on a quiet country road just after last orders.

Jonny Forster
New Crofton, West Yorkshire

PAUL CHRISTON, CWCC

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WHY FORTEAN?



FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of dogmatic scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity

in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

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SO-WE LEARNED THAT...

APOLLO 11 WENT TO THE MOON SO THAT BUZZ ALDRIN, (A 32° MASON) COULD SET UP A MASONIC TEMPLE...

I THOUGHT HE WAS A CATHOLIC?..



THE RUMOURS OF FAKE MOON LANDINGS WERE STARTED BY NASA ITSELF TO COVER UP WHAT THEY REALLY FOUND...



-EVIDENCE OF ANCIENT ALIEN TECHNOLOGY!



DOMES OF SUPER-HARD GLASS THAT CAN ONLY EXIST ON THE MOON, ENCLOSING -- STUFF!



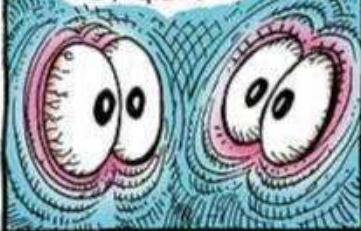
PYRAMID STRUCTURES ON A MONUMENTAL SCALE...



ENHANCED LUNAR PHOTOS SHOW EVIDENCE OF GIANT GLASS TOWERS...



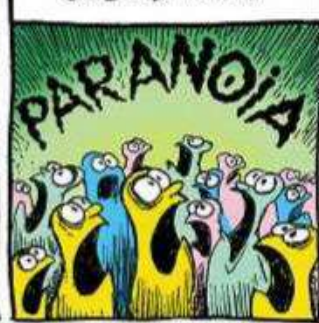
THE APOLLO ASTRONAUTS WERE HYPNOTISED BEFORE DE-BRIEFING, TO "HELP THEM REMEMBER"--THE HYPNOTIST WAS ALSO HYPNOTISED TO HELP HER FORGET...



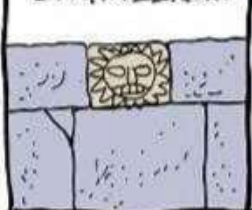
THIS SECRET KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN COVERED UP, BUT BECAUSE OF THE INTERNET AND ALL THAT STUFF, IT'S ALL GOING TO KICK OFF!



WHICH MEANS AN INCREASE IN CONTROL TECHNOLOGY AS ALL THE ALIEN STUFF TAKES EVERYBODY'S JOBS, MAN!



MEANWHILE, AROUND THE WORLD, ARE ANCIENT MEGALITHIC STRUCTURES THAT DEFY EXPLANATION BY MODERN ENGINEERS...

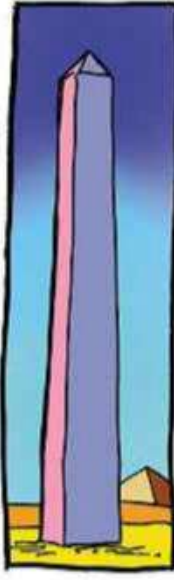


THESE STONES WEIGH 1000 TONS EACH, AND THEY'RE CARVED OUT OF ONE BLOCK OF GRANITE!



EGYPTIAN OBELISKS, WHICH HAD TO BE CARVED FROM ONE FLAWLESS BLOCK OF GRANITE- WHICH CONTAINED A MYRIAD OF QUARTZ CRYSTALS...

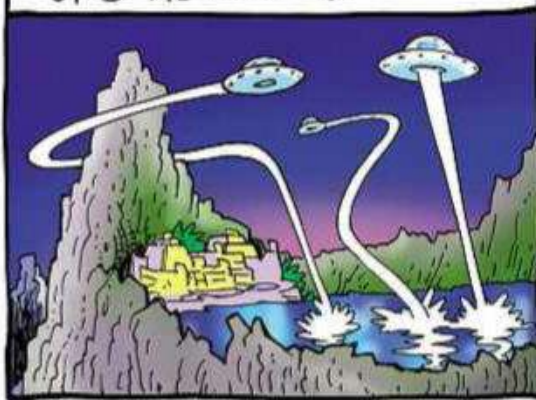
WERE THEY BATTERIES EMITTING RAYS OF POWER TO MAKE THIS MEGALITHIC CULTURE WORK?



AND ENHANCED PHOTOS SHOW OBELISKS ON THE MOON! AND ON MARS AND ITS MOONS- PHOBOS AND DEIMOS...



ANCIENT MEGALITHIC CITIES ON SOUTH AMERICAN MOUNTAIN LAKES (SUCH AS TITICACA) ARE SITES OF FREQUENT UFO ACTIVITY!!



THE CLOSING "50TH APOLLO ANNIVERSARY" PANEL REVEALED SOME INTERESTING BITS OF AD HOC INFORMATION, SUCH AS...

THE REASON WE HAVEN'T BEEN BACK TO THE MOON SINCE THE 1970s IS THE PEOPLE UP THERE HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE AMOUNT OF RUBBISH WE LEFT BEHIND - INCLUDING 93 KILOS OF FAECES!



AS THE APOLLO 11 LANDER APPROACHED TOUCHDOWN, NEIL ARMSTRONG SAW, ON THE EDGE OF A CRATER, THREE SILVER DISCS! NASA QUICKLY TURNED THE LANDER SO IT BLEW UP DUST, OBSCURING THE VIEW FROM THE CAMERAS...



IN 1979 A SECRET US MILITARY BASE ON THE MOON WAS NUKED BY THE SOVIETS, AFTER REAGAN ANNOUNCED HIS STAR WARS DEFENCE PROGRAM...



...AND THERE WAS A SALACIOUS AND VERY AMUSING STORY CONCERNING NEIL ARMSTRONG, HIS FIRST WORDS ON THE MOON, AND AN INCIDENT IN HIS CHILDHOOD - BUT WHICH GOOD TASTE REQUIRES ME TO WITHHOLD FROM THE SENSITIVE READERS OF FT!

AS A FORTEAN, MY ONLY OBLIGATION TO ANY SET OF UNEXPLAINED DATA IS TO ASK: "WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON OUT THERE WITHOUT MY PERMISSION!?"



AWAKENINGS 2019 WAS AN EXCELLENT EVENT - I HAD A FASCINATING DAY!



AND I AM UNSWERVING IN MY ADMIRATION OF MIKE, BUZZ AND NEIL!



COMING NEXT MONTH



LET IT GROW

THE WORLD'S LONGEST BEARDS
AND THEIR OWNERS



RUNEY TUNES

THE MYSTICAL NAZISM OF
MIGUEL SERRANO



MYSTERY AIRDROPS,
V2 DISINFORMATION,
ANTI-VAXXER PANICS,
AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 384

ON SALE 12 SEPT 2019

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

More than 270 election officials in Indonesia died from exhaustion caused by long hours and excessive work in sweltering conditions, counting votes when about 80 per cent of the country's 193 million eligible voters took part in a poll on 17 April – the first to combine the presidential, parliamentary and regional authority elections. Some 800,000 polling stations were required to allow the country's diverse population to cast their ballots across its 18,000-island archipelago. Ten days later, 272 election officials had died and 1,878 others had fallen ill. *BBC News, Sky News, 28 April 2019.*

A factory worker was decapitated by a lift in India after she "absentmindedly" tried to free her headphones that got tangled in the lift's collapsible grille as she arrived for work on 27 May. The severed head of Sushila Vishwakarma, 48, was discovered on the ground floor of the plastics factory in Vadodara, while her body was in the lift that travelled to the third floor. The headphones were still in the ears of her detached head — and a playlist was running on the phone in her hand. *Indian Express online, nypost.com, 28 May; thaivisa.com, 3 June 2019.*

A 45-year-old motorcyclist from Charlotte, North Carolina, died on 9 June when he was struck by lightning and then crashed on the I-95 highway in Volusia County, Florida. A photograph showed the biker's shattered helmet with cracks and burns from the bolt. It was unclear whether the cause of death was the lightning strike or the subsequent crash. Only 10 per cent of those struck by lightning are killed. Since 2016, there have been 11 motorcycle-related lightning deaths. Over the last three decades, the US has sustained an average of 43 lightning deaths per annum, although since 2009 (for some reason) the average has dropped to 27. *Washington Post, 10 June 2019.*

Isabel Bytautas, 55, was killed when she was struck by lightning in the Scottish Highlands on 8 June. The healthcare worker from Selkirk and six other members of the Linlithgow Ramblers were caught in a 'fluke' storm while climbing a mountain ridge on Na Gruagaichean (3,465ft/1,056m) near Fort William. Another woman was injured and was in a stable condition in hospital. "It was almost like a bomb had gone off," said a rescuer.

"Rocks and big clods of turf had been uprooted and flung into the air." *Times, D.Telegraph, 10 June 2019.*



César Cuauhtémoc González Barrón, 51, a Mexican wrestler known as Silver King, died mid-bout in the ring at the Roundhouse, Camden Town, north London, on Saturday night, 11 May, after being pinned by his opponent, Juventud "The Juice" Guerrero. The former world champion – who had appeared as Ramses in the film comedy *Nacho Libre* alongside Jack Black in 2006 – had suffered a suspected heart attack. The referee rolled him on his back as he counted him out, not realising he was seriously ill. Medics arrived within five minutes, but he was pronounced dead at the scene. González was what is known in *lucha libre* ("free fighting", the Mexican version of wrestling) as a *rudo*. Wrestlers, or *luchadores*, divide into two main groups: the *rudos* and the *técnicos*. The former are the bad boys, the "heels" in American wrestling parlance, who bend and break the rules. The *técnicos* are the good guys, the "babyfaces". A third category, the *exóticos*, who are often gay, bring camp flamboyance to the ring. *D.Telegraph, Sun, Eve. Standard, 13 May 2019.*

Ehud Arye Laniado, 65, a short-statured Israeli who founded Omega Diamonds, based in Antwerp, died during penis enlargement surgery at a private clinic in the Champs Élysées on 2 March. A substance injected into his virile member caused a fatal heart attack. A friend of the billionaire trader said he was "always focused on his appearance and how others perceived him." In 2015, Laniado sold "the Blue Moon of Josephine", a 12.03 carat blue diamond, in Geneva to Hong Kong businessman and convicted felon Joseph Lau Luen Hung for £36.8million. *dailymail.co.uk, 6 Mar; Times, 7 Mar 2019.*

On 27 April, Chutikarn Worachote, 54, was bitten on the right foot by a *takhap* (centipede) and was taken to hospital in Nakorn Pathom, Thailand. She was given an injection and medication and sent home to recover. Her son said she was in great pain and there was swelling around the bite. She had an evening meal and went to bed, but the following morning her son went to rouse her but found her dead. *thaivisa.com, 29 April 2019.*

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